THE SPHERE

Vol. CLXVII No. 2179 WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE GRAPHIC OCTOBER 25 1941

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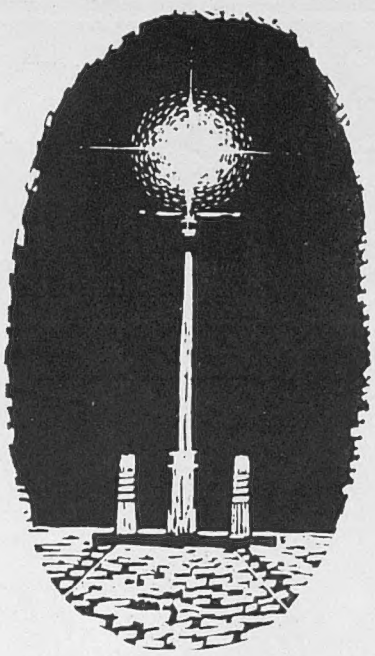

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Volume CLXVII No. 2179

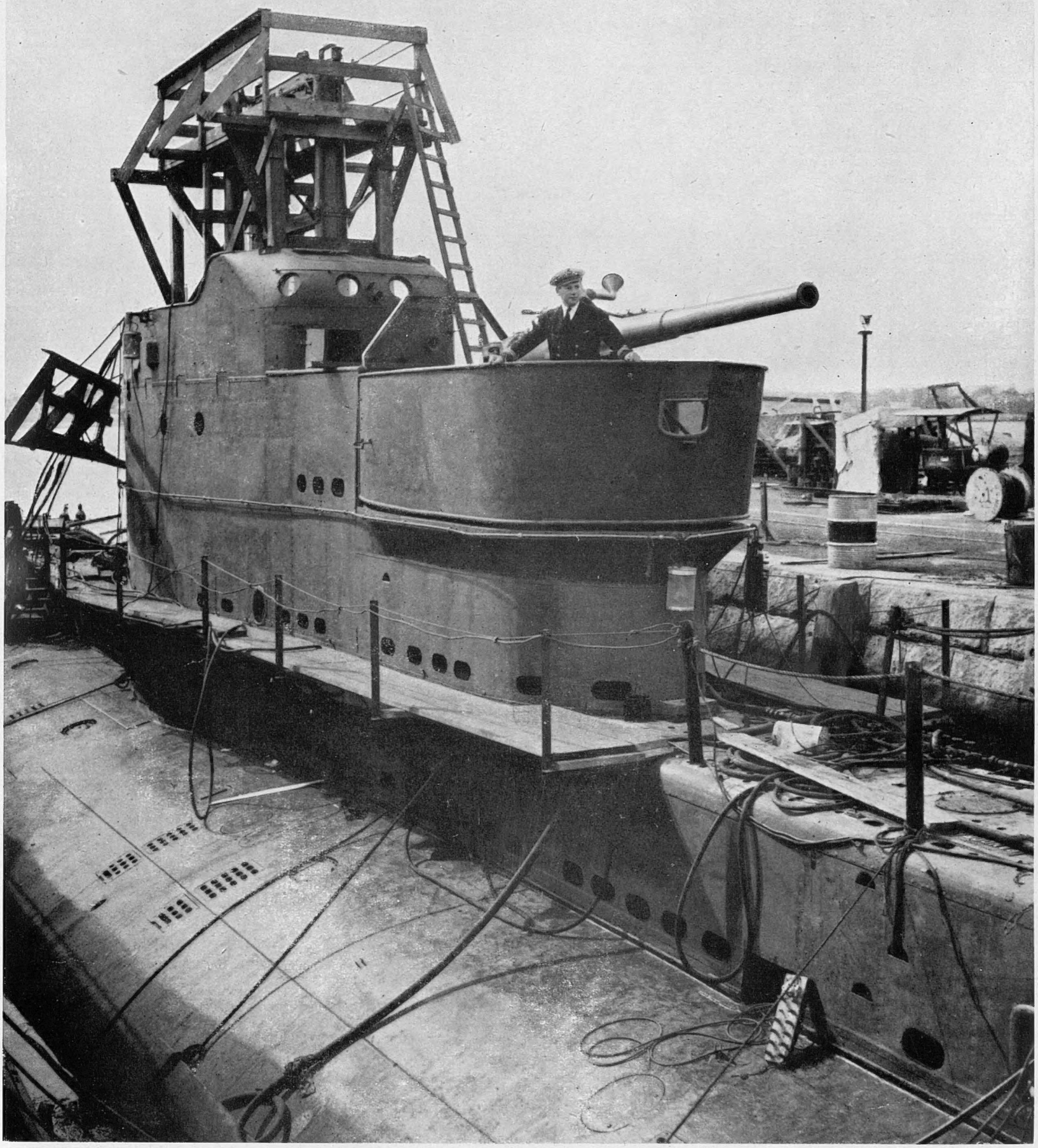
The SPHERE, London, October 25, 1941

THE SPHERE

With which is incorporated "THE GRAPHIC"

The Empire's Illustrated Weekly

London, October 25, 1941



**AMERICA UNDERTAKES THE REPAIR OF DAMAGED BRITISH NAVAL VESSELS: LIEUTENANT ROBERT ALEXANDER, COMMANDER OF H.M. SUBMARINE "PANDORA," WITH HIS VESSEL IN THE U.S. NAVY YARD AT PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

It has been announced during recent weeks that quite a number of British Naval vessels have gone to America for repairs and overhauls: the advantages of such an arrangement, which permits the necessary work to be done under raid-free conditions, are very considerable indeed. Amongst British vessels now in the United States is H.M. Submarine *Pandora*, which is in dry-dock in the Navy Yard at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The picture reproduced above (just received, by Clipper mail) shows her commander, Lieut. Robert Alexander, surveying from his conning tower the progress of the repair work. *Pandora* is one of the four remaining submarines of the Parthian class: she is a vessel of 1,475 tons, has a speed of 17½ knots on the surface and 9 knots submerged, and carries a complement of fifty. She was completed during 1930. One of the vessels of this class, *Poseidon*, was lost in collision in June 1931; and another, *Phoenix*, was posted as missing in August 1940

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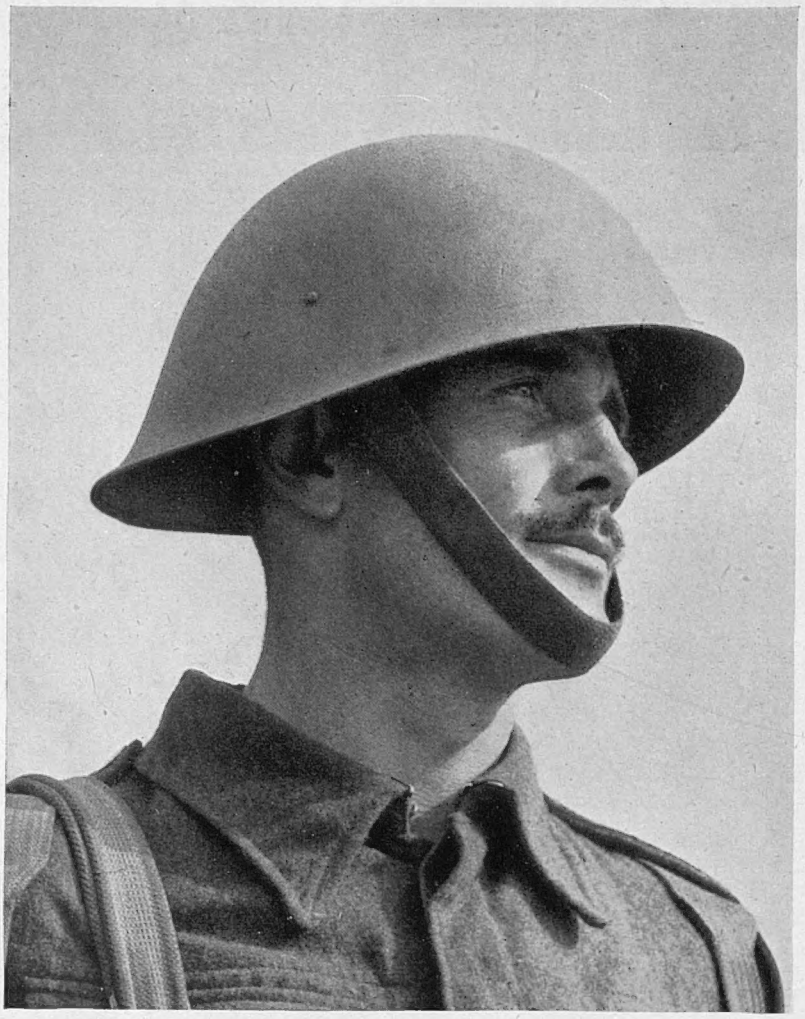
# A WAR NEWSLETTER—No. 112

1, NEW OXFORD STREET, W.C.1.

## Complacency and Doubt.

—It is abundantly clear that while a certain measure of "cheerfulness" (with its terrible implication of "complacency") insists on breaking in before a third terrible winter of trial and privation and darkness closes in on Britain, a large measure of doubt is beginning to break in on the Nazis and Axis Powers. To the authorities on each side these manifestations call for strenuous checking. There must be no complacency in Britain. There must be no doubts about the godhead of Hitler in the Axis territories. But both are difficult to check. For the one feeds on every proof of the existence of the other and the "vicious circle" intensifies and widens. Our regrettable cheerfulness, while deplored at home, may be usefully exploited in broadcasts to Germany and Italy, and it is clear that Goebbels is now seriously concerned with the influence of our propaganda on Germans and Italians, whose doubts of Hitler's infallibility grow daily. Those doubts are traitors of the Fascist cause, and they feed on our "confidence" propaganda. Without chucking up our hats, or holloa-ing, or promising ourselves a quick finish, what advances may be soberly acknowledged on the long, long road to final victory? It is reasonable at this sad time of the year to table them, after rejecting all evidence which is not proven, and cutting out wishful thinking. **1.** There is not the least doubt that dictatorship of the Fascist pattern has lost a part of its terror and half its reputation for strength, efficiency and infallibility. One or two dictators have fled, one or two more are definitely blown on, if not finally exposed. **2.** Mussolini is a sick man and a pricked gas-bag. His egregious Press satellites have begun to stammer and hedge. The Italian public is sick of the war, detests the German occupation, and has grave doubts about the future of Italy under Fascist principles and direction. It is clear that the House of Savoy has lost caste by its weak truckling to Mussolini, and that the King would to-day be looked to as a leader in a new and saner order for Italy if he had shown more courage in the past and not tamely sacrificed his own convictions. He is no fool, but he is a weak man. There is little doubt that by intensifying the war against Italy, and as a result of the hardships which this winter must bring on her, we shall find Italy before next spring a hotbed for revolt against Fascism, with a peace party of growing dimensions, and a will to war so weakened as to be a greater menace to Germany than to ourselves. **3.** We may guess, though we cannot confirm, that in Germany itself there is a growing breach between the Nazi political chiefs and the Army. To what extent the Army is now in control of Hitler's policy, so far as strategy is concerned, we do not know, but we may assume that some concessions in that absolute authority have already been made by the Führer. Goebbels's anxiety about British propaganda effects on German minds is clear proof that doubts are growing and beginning to find voice—a still, small voice, no doubt—but . . . turn back to the history of the last war. Goebbels spoke a rare truth when he pointed out how much British propaganda had helped to disintegrate Germany in 1918. **4.** We have abundant and clear proof from occupied territories that an eternal truth is still true. Murder, injustice and ruthless repression never have kept down a free people enslaved. Always the very intensification of repression correspondingly intensifies resistance. It is oil, not water, poured on the flames of revolt. These are sober but sound conclusions from a growing volume of evidence. They give no cause for complacency. They justify sober faith in assured and ultimate victory. And so I say, in God's name *let the peoples of freedom express that confidence unchecked and unsnubbed.* We are not children. Privations and bombs are quick and effective correctives to complacency, and *they* will surely come. Until they do, we need every ounce of confidence and cheer we can muster before night closes down on the third winter. But totally apart from *that* aspect of psychology is the clear psychological aspect of propaganda. It is *our* confidence and cheerfulness—above all other factors—which are the prime breeders of doubt and despondency in the enemy. That was the reason why our propaganda was so effective in 1918. Only that reiterated confidence will make it as effective in 1942.



**A NEW STEEL HELMET FOR THE BRITISH ARMY?** A new helmet has been designed for military purposes and is now being tried out by the Army during manœuvres. This design, it is believed, would afford the wearer considerably more protection during action

## The Weathercocks and Russia.

—There is almost no inconsistency, no sudden change of wind, of which a proportion of even a level-headed nation is not capable in war. It is so with the Russian campaign. Let us face the facts as realists and as level-headed men. Nothing we could have achieved by diplomacy or victories in the field could have brought Russia in on our side. If Germany had left her alone, she would have maintained a shrewd neutrality, by no means favourable to us. Her bitter sacrifices are in no way laid to our door. Those sacrifices have enormously improved *our* position as a result of events utterly beyond our control or direction. Those sacrifices are terrible. She has lost more than half her area of productive activity. She has lost of her own territory an area far larger than the Reich. She has sacrificed the most modern industrial works and plants to an inestimable value, and food-producing lands which could feed half-Europe outside Russia. Many of her noble cities are in ruins. More than half her first-line effectives are used up and probably much more than half her first-line machines and guns. The Nazis on their side can still claim (to Europe) that their armies are "unbeatable" and that their general plans of strategy "never fail"; that what they promise to achieve they fulfil. When Hitler declares that the last decisive battle of the year had gone in his favour, he can make the claim with a show of justification, if he bases it solely on what Russia has lost. Based on what Germany has lost and on the new responsibilities facing her armies, it presents to Nazis a different and even a doleful picture. I am concerned here only with the reaction in certain quarters in Britain—and in America, too—among the weathercocks, which just now are spinning in the winds. If, in considering the march of events as it affects the Great Alliance against Hitlerism and Satan, we can think *individually* and selfishly and naturally, what have Russia's sacrifices brought to us? They have utterly transformed a 5 to 1 chance into a chance better than evens. But for the decision by Hitler to attack Russia, the Nazis would to-day be able to employ in three concurrent attacks on our fronts at least 2,000,000 more of their first-line troops, with all the appropriate guns and war engines. Instead of having practically achieved air parity with them, that aim would still be a far-distant dream. We should be pinched for food and behindhand with American deliveries, while the Germans would have no urgent problems in the way of petrol reserves or transport lines. In a word, those Britons who could cheer to the echo the Premier's "Give us the goods and we will finish the job" (said so few months ago) are not worth a moment's respect when now with long faces they declare that the Russian "collapse" has made things black indeed, and that "we have our backs to the wall once more and all to do again." *We have had our backs to the wall since Munich, and before.* But at last it *is* a wall, and it bristles with strong obstacles. What is more, unlooked for and uncountable millions of stout hearts have their backs to the same wall and are still fighting beside us against an enemy whose man-power is not inexhaustible, however vast his production-potential. Let us, then, keep a sense of proportion, look facts in the face, and derive confidence from so doing.

## Wastage of Fanatics.

—If we can take to ourselves a comforting reflection without instantly relaxing our efforts and sinking into complacency (as I believe we can), Colonel Reitz, South Africa's Deputy Premier, supplied one the other day. He expressed his own view (which I share) that at the moment Hitler is more "blitzed" than "blitzing," even while he has just about finally "exterminated" Russia, on paper. "Napoleon," said Colonel Reitz, "was going to invade England, like Hitler. He turned to Russia and that smashed him. It looks as if the same thing will happen again." Actually at the moment of writing, we don't so much *see* it as *feel it in our bones.* Russia gave Napoleon a chill to which he succumbed. She may give Hitler chronic indigestion ending the same way. Colonel Reitz added: "Our manpower is intact. The Germans at a moderate estimate have had 2,500,000 casualties. The bulk of *Hitler's young fanatics* have been used up." That *is* a comforting thought, and it contains a large measure of truth. Hitler's blind young worshippers are decimated, and the other millions are not material quite so malleable for his hammer. Among the Fascists, as opposed to the Nazis, the young fanatics have long since been melting into something less dictator-loved and dictator-loving. In short, we have (thanks mostly to Russia) gone quite a long way towards our main objective, ridding the world of these juggernaut fanatics.

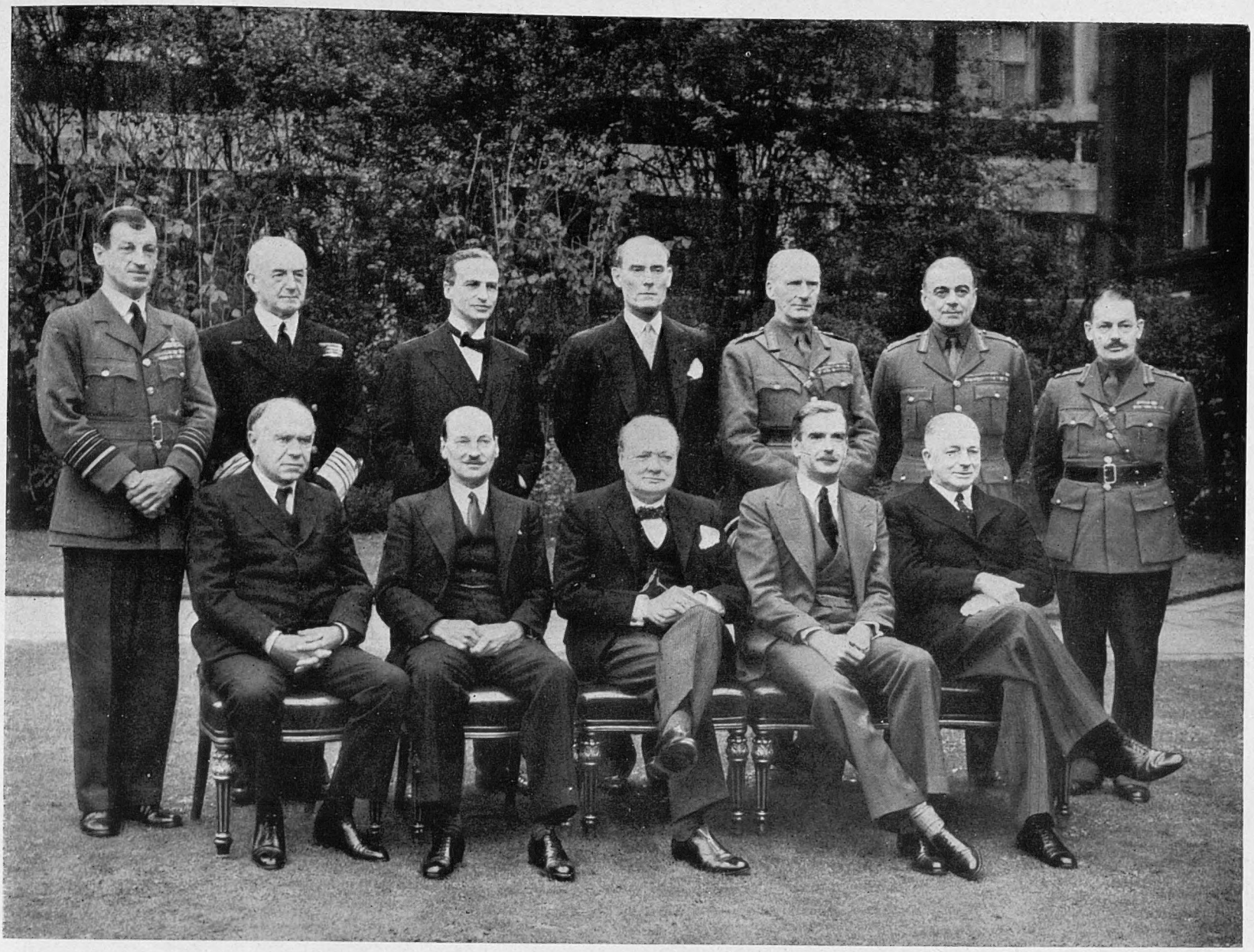
## A Hint of Winter.

—I note up October 12 as the first day of autumn which gave a hint of winter. On that day came the first ground frosts for months and on that day the thermometer in my room first fell below 60 deg. during the night—since the end of May. What a boon has been this unrivalled spell of early autumn weather, remarkable not only for its extraordinary warmth, but also for its long succession of misty periods and for its high record of sunshine. It must have done us all a power of good, storing us with sun and heat units against winter chills and ills and cutting a salient out of the dark end of winter. All through September and the first days of October, thanks to the sunshine, the average thermometer reading in my room at 2 p.m. has been 67 deg. Often it has been 75 deg., and occasionally up to 80 deg. In the same period of six weeks the total rainfall was ·65 in. I can recall no parallel with the number of hours of mist and haze during these six weeks nor of more continuous or warmer sunshine. It has been a boon to me and to tomatoes. The wild strawberries are larger and more plentiful than in summer. So are the roses and, for that matter, the weeds. Alas, how much more difficult life becomes with the approach of winter! It is the end of privacy. Henceforth one can no longer claim "a room of one's own"—a thing of such vital importance in an overcrowded house (at least to a man of the pen). Henceforth sitting-rooms have to be heated before they can be used, and heating raises the acute problem of fuel. And that is only one, perhaps trivial, item in the catalogue of winter handicaps.

## Autumn Books.

—Here is a list of a few new autumn books which I intend to read before Christmas. I have chosen them for their remoteness from war. They have nothing whatever to do with war politics, war strategy, social problems of war or peace aims. I have chosen them by their labels. Housman's farewell to all that, his *Gracious Majesty.* I shall enjoy his last views of the great Queen. And Dr. Somerville's (not forgetting Martin Ross's) *Notions in Garrison.* A commonplace book by Dr. Somerville cannot fail to be a rich granary of humour, humanity and experience generally. And Oman's *Memories of Victorian Oxford.* (Gosh! How different from the Oxford of 1941!) And Hilton's new novel, *Random Harvest.* And—a mild concession to the war, very topical for a Home Guard—Anthony Armstrong's latest humours of a (Sussex) *Village in Wartime,* which will, I think, prove reasonably "remote" from the brass tacks of modern war. This list shall be my concession to current literature, my exception to my self-imposed war rule to read nothing more modern than Trollope nor of more "practical politics" than Mrs. Henry Wood or Henry Kingsley.

THE OLD STAGER



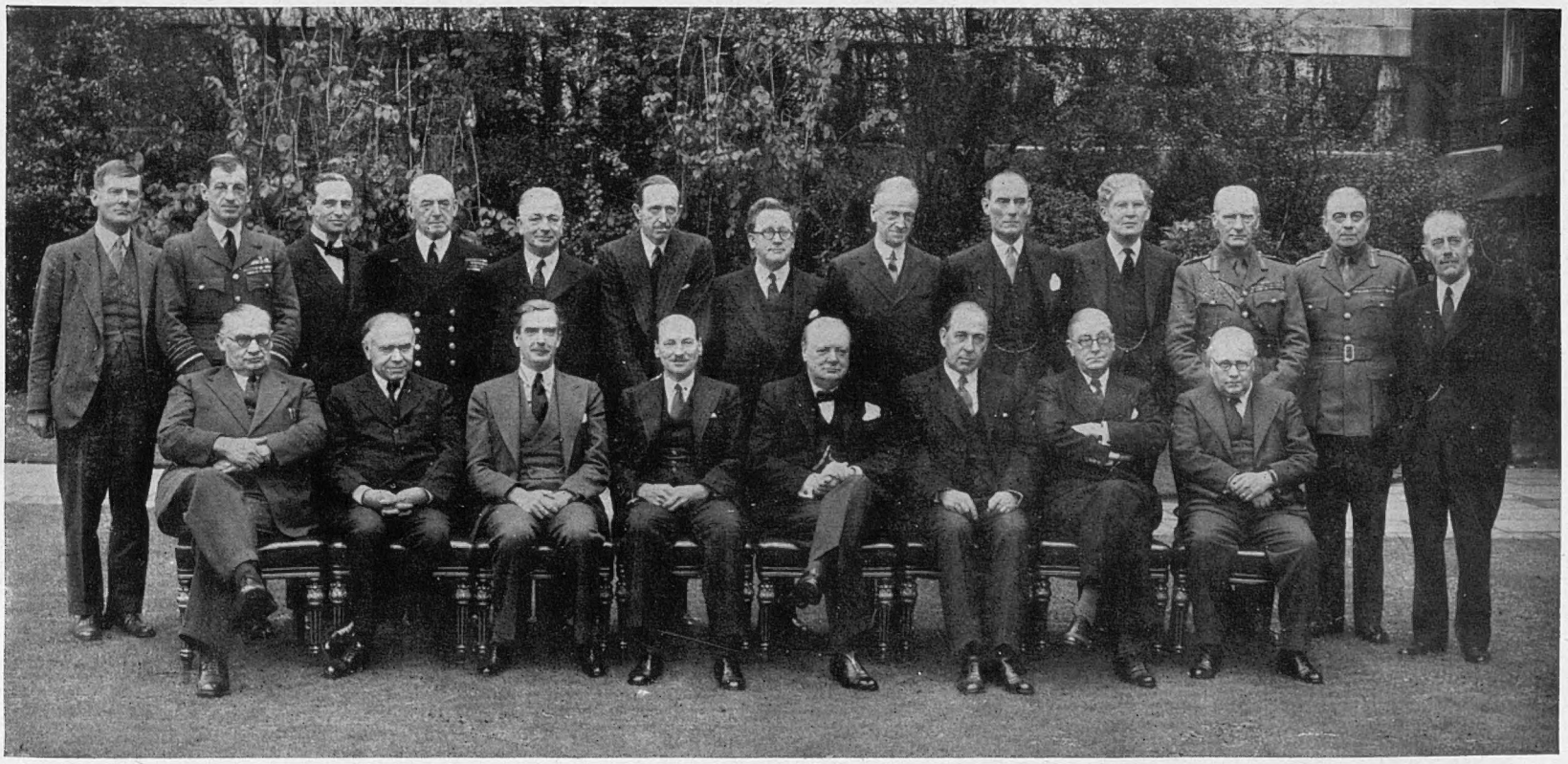
**MEMBERS OF THE CABINET specially posed with the members of the Defence Committee in the garden of No. 10, Downing Street**

From left to right in the back row are the following—Air Chief-Marshal Sir Charles Portal (Chief of Air Staff); Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound (Chief of Naval Staff); Sir Archibald Sinclair (Secretary for Air); Captain D. Margesson (Secretary for War); General Sir John Dill (Chief of the Imperial General Staff); Major-General Sir Hastings Ismay (Deputy Secretary of the War Cabinet); and Colonel Hollis (Senior Assistant Secretary of the War Cabinet). Seated in front are—Lord Beaverbrook (Minister of Supply); Mr. C. R. Attlee (Lord Privy Seal); Mr. Winston Churchill (Prime Minister); Mr. Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary); and Mr. A. V. Alexander (First Lord of the Admiralty)

# THE WAR CABINET

## And the Members of the Defence Committee

*Two pictures taken during a recent meeting at No. 10, Downing Street*

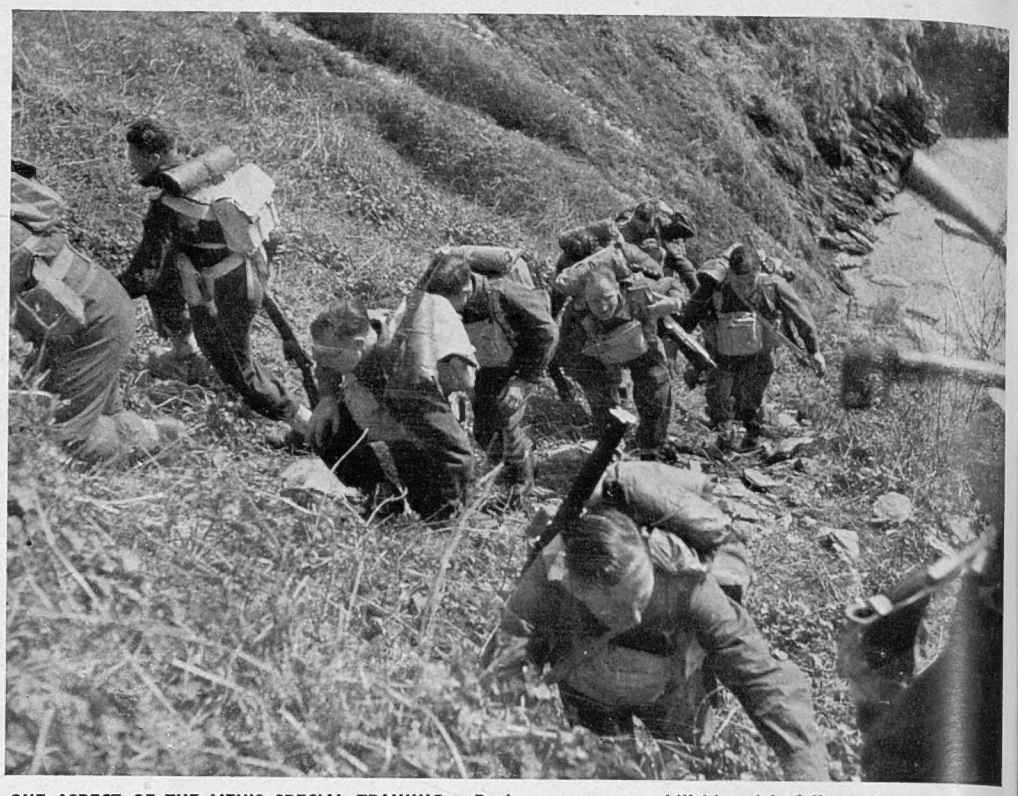


**CABINET MINISTERS and SERVICE CHIEFS who are all regular attendants at the meetings at NO. 10, DOWNING STREET**

Seated in front, from left to right, are the following eight members of the "inner" War Cabinet—Mr. Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour); Lord Beaverbrook (Minister of Supply); Mr. Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary); Mr. C. R. Attlee (Lord Privy Seal); Mr. Winston Churchill (Prime Minister); Sir John Anderson (Lord President of the Council); Mr. Arthur Greenwood (Minister without Portfolio); and Sir Kingsley Wood (Chancellor of the Exchequer). Standing behind, from left to right, are—Sir Edward Bridges (Secretary of the War Cabinet); Air Chief-Marshal Sir Charles Portal (Chief of Air Staff); Sir Archibald Sinclair (Secretary for Air); Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound (Chief of Naval Staff); Mr A. V. Alexander (First Lord of the Admiralty); Viscount Cranborne (Secretary of State for the Dominions); Mr. Herbert Morrison (Minister of Home Security); Lord Moyne (Secretary of State for the Colonies); Captain David Margesson (Secretary for War); Mr. Brendan Bracken (Minister of Information); General Sir John Dill (Chief of the Imperial General Staff); Major-General Sir Hastings Ismay (Deputy Secretary of the War Cabinet); and Sir Alexander Cadogan (Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs)

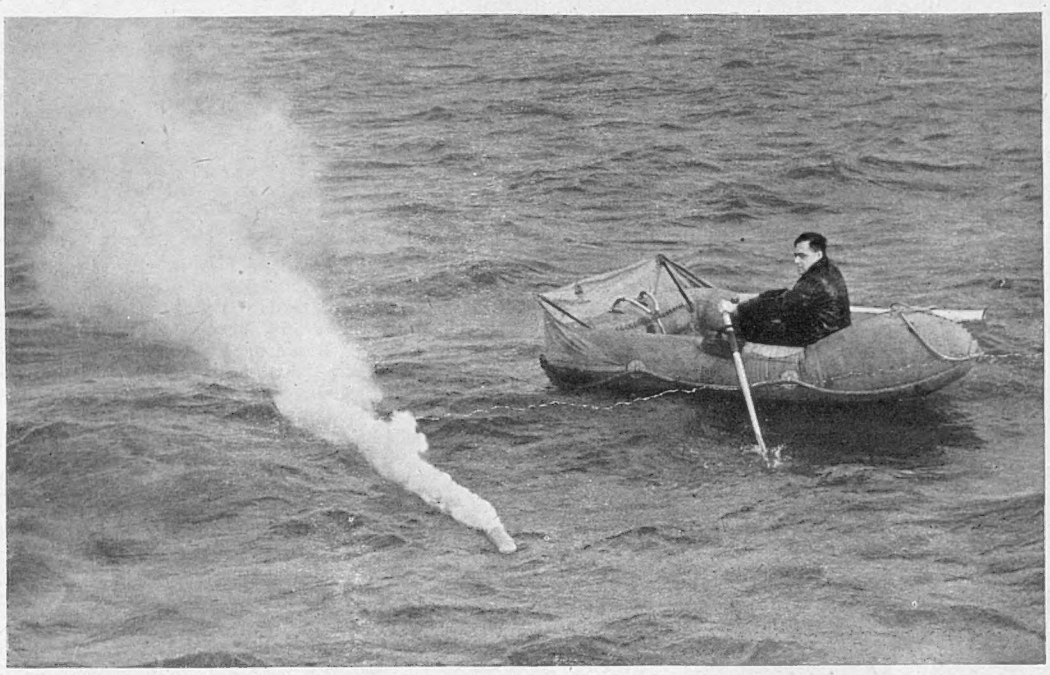
# THE ARMY'S NEW COMMANDOS

TWO OF THE MEN WHO HAVE JOINED AN ARMY COMMANDO trying out their specialised equipment in the field



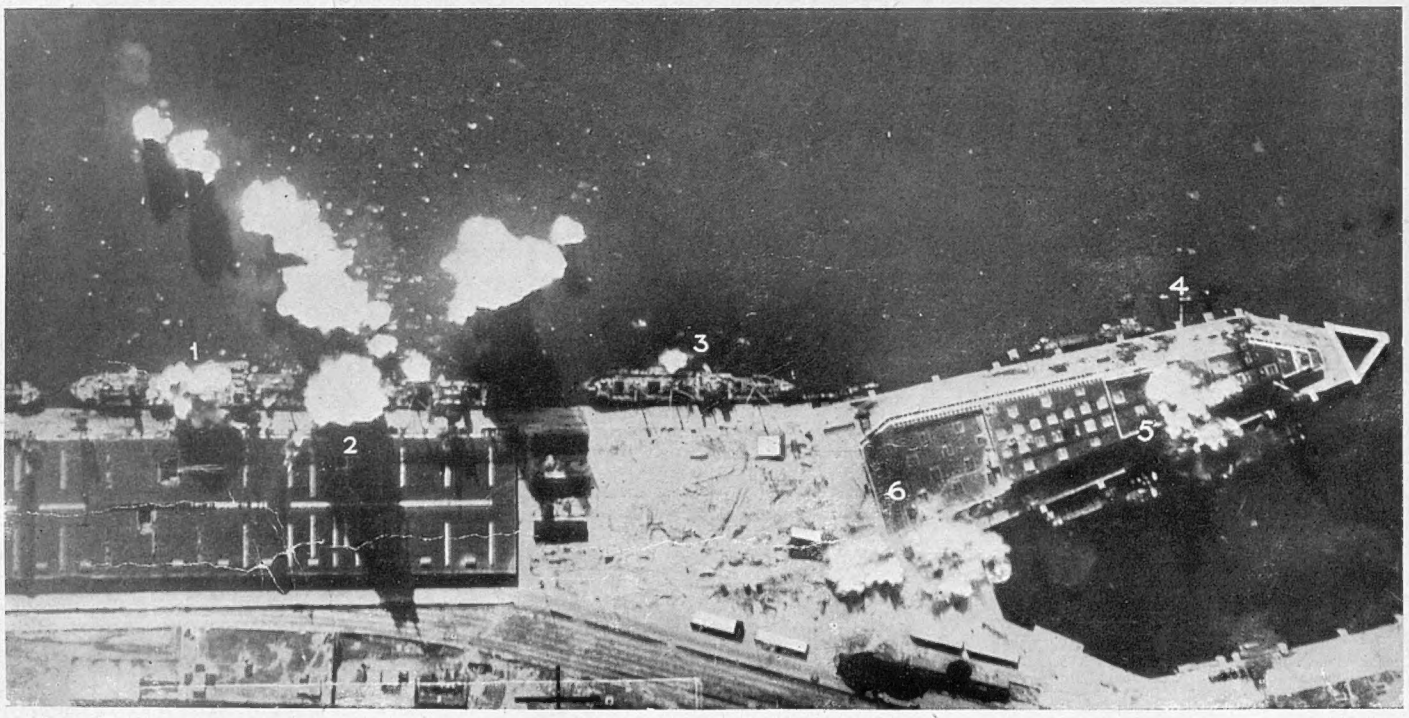
ONE ASPECT OF THE MEN'S SPECIAL TRAINING: Racing up a steep hillside with full equipment—a task which calls for the very highest physical fitness

Details have just been released of the Army's Commandos. These units of highly trained, picked men have been recruited from nearly every regiment of cavalry and infantry, and they have undergone exceedingly severe training to fit them for the special duties on which they will be employed. All members of the Commandos are volunteers; and each carries a Tommy gun, a knife and a club



A SMOKE TRAIL AT SEA AS AN S O S SIGNAL: The "Wessex Daylight Smoke Signal," which lets off an orange-coloured smoke which can be seen by airmen more than 30 miles away

PULLING THE SAFETY-PIN OF THE NEW-TYPE FLARE, which will in future be carried by all ships: A new life-saving apparatus has just been perfected for seagoing craft: this takes the form of a smoke trail. By pressing a trigger on a small canister a cloud of orange smoke is released which will rise for an hour or more, increasing in density with the passage of the minutes. Experts of the Ministry of Shipping have tested this invention in secret; and it has been proved that the smoke can be seen more than 30 miles away

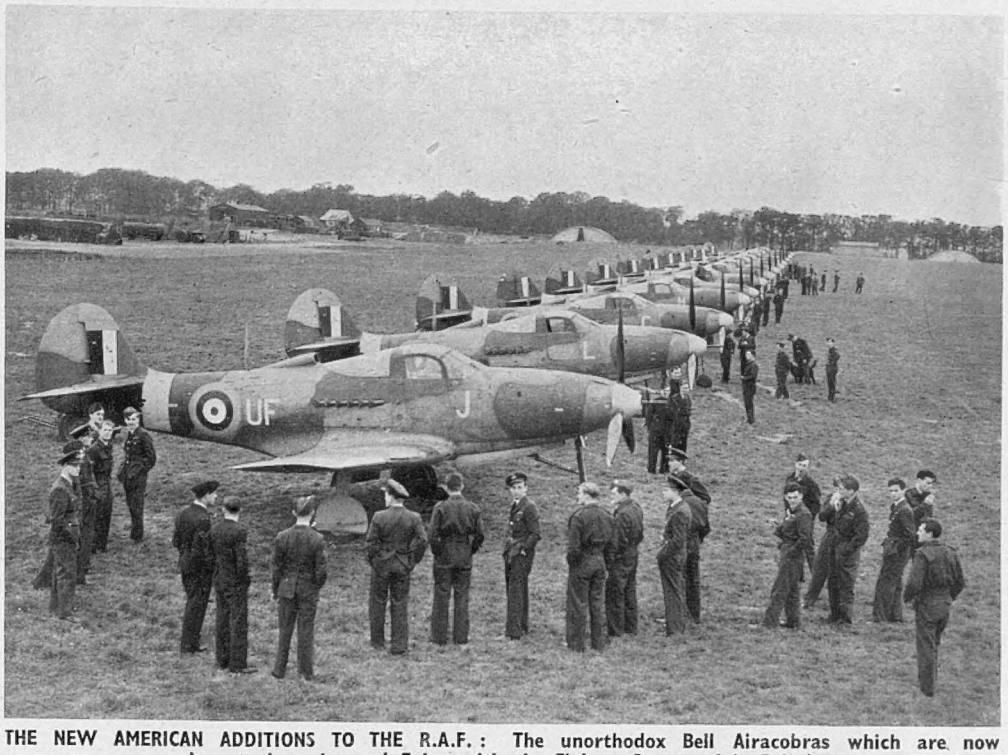



*On left* — BRITISH R.A.F. BOMBERS ATTACK LE HAVRE

Aircraft of the R.A.F. Bomber Command, escorted by fighters, carried out a daylight raid on the docks and shipping at Le Havre on October 15. This picture was taken during the course of the attack. It shows: (1) Bombs bursting on a 12,000-ton tanker: the warehouse just below has been damaged in previous raids; (2) Bomb bursting on a 5,000-ton merchant vessel; (3) Near misses. The ship is a vessel of 9,500 tons; (4) Wreck, partly submerged, of a vessel sunk in a previous raid; (5) Bombs bursting on the quay, and on a coastal tanker of 1,000 tons; (6) Bombs bursting on the quay

# THE COMING OF THE COBRAS

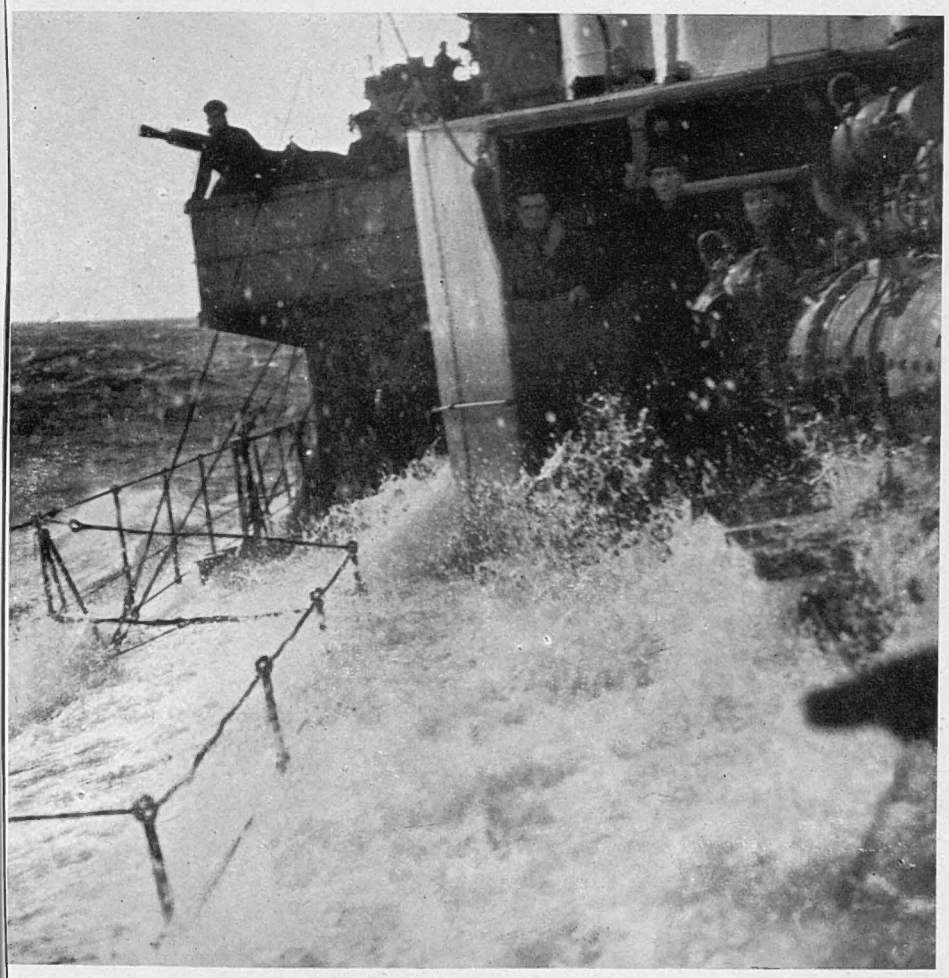
THE SQUADRON LEADER OF AN AIRACOBRA SQUADRON (a holder of the D.F.C.) climbing into the cockpit of his plane




THE NEW AMERICAN ADDITIONS TO THE R.A.F.: The unorthodox Bell Airacobras which are now in actual service and flying with the Fighter Command in Britain

The Bell Airacobra fighter, which is now fully operational with the R.A.F. Fighter Command, is one of the most advanced designs of aircraft in service anywhere in the world at the present time. The aircraft, in addition to being used by the R.A.F., is also employed in large numbers by the U.S. Army Air Corps. The leading unorthodox features of the Airacobra are: (1) The position of the engine—which is located amidships behind the pilot; and (2) the tricycle undercarriage. In America it has been stated that the top speed is in excess of 400 m.p.h. There are several versions of armament: one consists of a 20-mm. cannon, firing through the airscrew hub, two machine-guns located in the nose and firing through the airscrew, and four machine-guns in the wings. The propeller is driven by a shaft passing under the pilot from the engine behind him

TAKING OFF: A picture which shows the unusual appearance of the Airacobra's tricycle undercarriage



THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC: A destroyer takes it green while on patrol: The Battle of the Atlantic is a continuous operation, which proceeds day and night, week in and week out. There is never a lull in this largest of all battlegrounds, which extends over an area of many thousands of miles. In the Atlantic, British and Allied ships are constantly at sea, despite the activities of the enemy's submarines and aircraft and occasional raiders. German surface ships, however, are not often found in the area: when one is found, she is hunted down and shares a fate similar to that of the *Bismarck*. The weather in the Atlantic is responsible for the weird but serviceable clothing worn by both officers and men in these icy and stormy regions. Now that the November gales are approaching, the life on board some of the smaller patrol vessels in the North Atlantic will be far from comfortable

AN OFFICER ON THE BRIDGE OF A DESTROYER, wearing a heavy sheepskin coat as a protection against the severe weather

R.A.F. FIGHTER PILOTS, WITH ONE OF THEIR HURRICANES, interested in their first meeting with a Russian sentry who is on duty at their aerodrome

PILOTS OUTSIDE THE DISPERSAL HUT WAIT FOR ORDERS: The clock indicates which of the aircraft ("'F' for Freddie," for example) are ready to take the air at fifteen minutes' notice *On right*—AIRMEN CARRYING AMMUNITION FOR THE GUNS TO THE AIRCRAFT

THE WING-COMMANDER AND OTHER OFFICERS OF THE WING ON "OBSERVATION HILL," whence instructions are telephoned down to the aerodrome

The British Wing of the R.A.F. Fighter Command operating in Russia is under the command of Wing-Commander G. R. Isherwood, A.F.C. The official Air Ministry pictures which we reproduce here illustrate the fluid nature of the fighting in which the British fighter pilots are now participating. Frequent conferences are held between Wing-Commander Isherwood and the officers of the Soviet Air Force, with whom our men are co-operating, on a hill-top which commands a wide view of the surrounding countryside. Here, charts are studied as they are spread out on the ground and decisions are taken concerning the joint sorties against the enemy to be made by the two forces. The knoll where these conferences are held is known as "Observation Hill": Wing-Commander Isherwood transmits his instructions from this spot to the aerodrome below through a field telephone specially erected for this purpose. These are the first pictures to reach England of the R.A.F. in action in Russia

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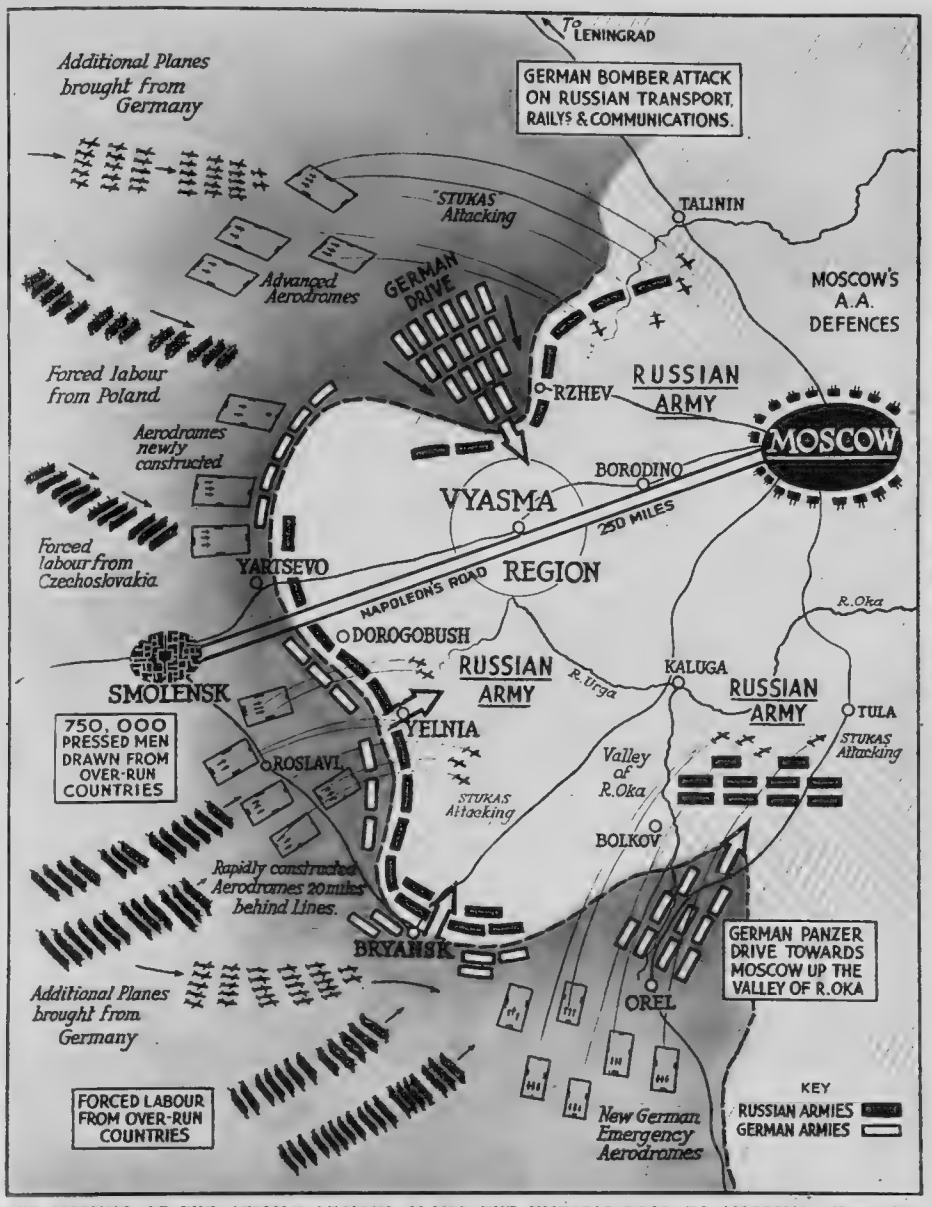
# The ASSAULT on MOSCOW

*How the German Forces had been Assembled for the Great Attack of which Hitler Boasted in Advance*

—Special *Sphere* diagrams

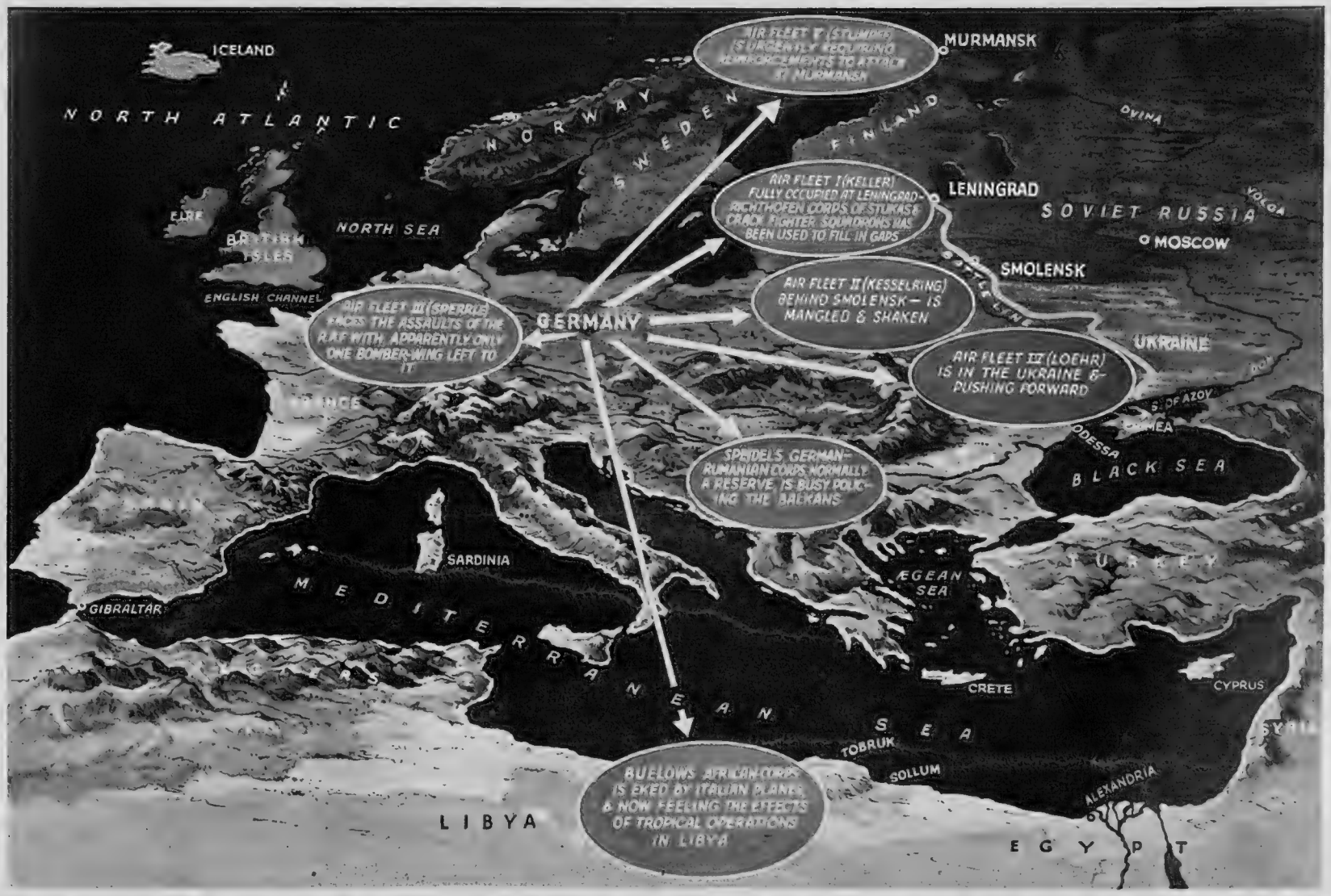



**THE MASSING OF THE GERMAN LEGIONS ALONG THE HISTORIC ROAD TO MOSCOW : How the Nazis mounted their terrific frontal assault on the Russian capital along the road which was traversed by Napoleon in 1812**

**AN ESSENTIAL JOB BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES : Men in the Auxiliary Services hard at work repairing a road on the Eastern Front**

*On left*—Whilst Marshal Timoshenko's armies were attacking in the Smolensk area and driving the Germans backwards, the latter were apparently making complete and devastating plans for the terrific drive to Moscow along the historic route followed by Napoleon through Borodino in 1812. The drive, when it came, was made at two main points—towards Vyasma and through Orel. Everything that the Germans possessed was thrown in—tanks, aircraft, men—and all were supported by forced labour drawn from all the countries the Germans had already overrun. Forced labour from Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, to the total of 750,000, was compelled to labour behind the lines on the repair of roads, bridges, railways and aerodromes. Some of the latter have been constructed within 20 miles from the fighting areas so that Stukas and fighter aircraft could be brought nearer and nearer. Additional aircraft, too, were brought from Germany to support the advances of the Army : and the German bombers never ceased to pound away at the Russian lines of communications

*Below*—The German Air Force has always been immensely strong : but since the attack on Russia its responsibilities have become so enormous and its effort so dispersed that it now requires every aeroplane it can muster. There are five "Air Fleets," and they are now disposed as shown below : in the Far North, Air Fleet V is operating in Finland and North Norway under Stumpff, who was calling urgently for reinforcements to attack Murmansk. Air Fleet I, under Keller, is fully occupied before Leningrad, and includes the crack Richthofen Corps, with its clouds of Stuka dive-bombers. At Smolensk, Kesselring's Air Fleet II was mangled and shaken in the attack on Moscow. Air Fleet IV, under Loehr, is in the Ukraine and going forward on the heels of Marshal Budenny. The German-Rumanian Corps, under Speidel, which should be in reserve, is now fully extended in policing the Balkans. Then there is Buelow's African Corps unhappily placed in Libya and eked out by Italian aircraft. Thus only Air Fleet III, under Sperrle, is left in the West for operations against Britain and to repel British attacks on France and Germany




**THE GERMAN ATTACK ON THE SOVIET HAS MEANT A REGROUPING OF HER AIR FORCE : The *Luftwaffe* is now dispersed along the vast Eastern Front, with only one Air Fleet left in the west and with an African Corps held down in the Western Desert**—*Drawing by E. G. Lambert*

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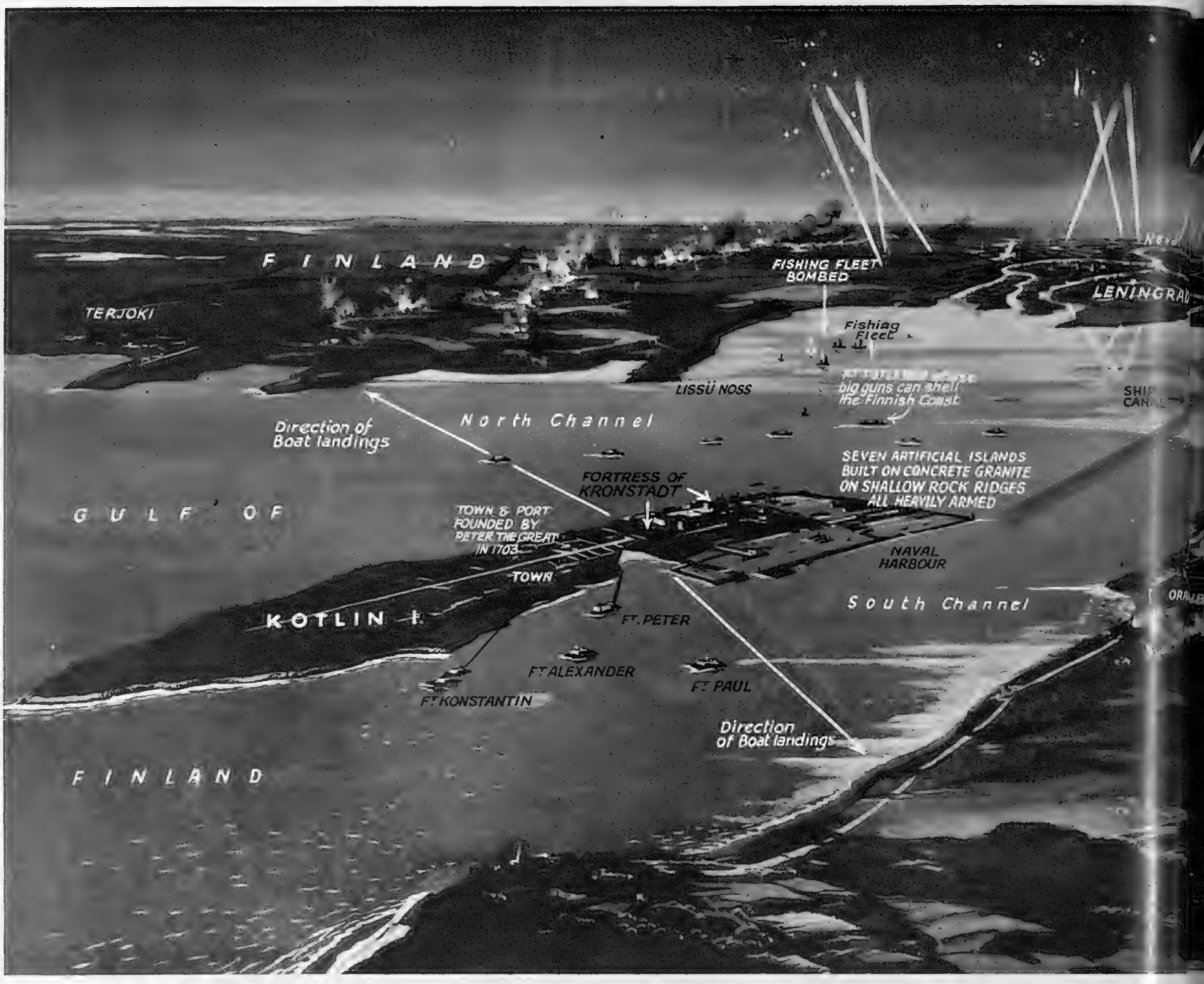



**THE THREE-SIDED WAR IN THE GULF OF FINLAND : The fortress of Kronstadt, base of the Russian Baltic Fleet, and the Russian coast up to Leningrad. This is where the Russians are in the rear of the Germans and the Finns.**—*Drawing by E. G. Lambert*

It has been reported that in the north the German pressure on Leningrad has eased off considerably, owing to the withdrawal of part of von Leeb's forces to take part in the Moscow offensive. Voroshilov's men are everywhere counter-attacking to prevent the enemy digging in, and they have won many successes. Although shelled and bombed, ships carrying vital materials still reach Leningrad by river. West of the city the Germans are constantly experiencing new Russian landings in their rear, and so are the Finns. The object of these raids is to destroy Nazi communications and to raid supply columns and gun positions. These German guns engage in a daily duel with the heavy batteries of the naval base at Kronstadt ; the Finns believe that the Russians are laying in great stores of food and ammunition in case the fortress has to withstand a siege and that the Russians could hold out for a considerable time in that eventuality. "Besides the mine-fields," runs one report, "east of the fortress lie seven artificial islands built on concrete granite on shallow-lying rock ridges, all heavily armed and stretching in a bow north towards the Finnish coast. Before them lies the fortress of Todtleben, whose great guns can without difficulty throw shells into the Finn towns of Terjoki, Knokkala, Ollila and Rajajoki"

# From the TWO ENDS of the RUSSIAN LINE: *Special Drawings and Diagrams*

**A NIGHT LANDING OF RUSSIAN SABOTEURS ON THE FINNISH COAST, from the fortified islets which extend from Kronstadt towards Finland. The object of these determined men is to harry supply traffic on the roads along the Gulf of Finland**

*Drawing by Wm. MacDowell*

**Russians are making constant landings**

**ON THE ODESSA FRONT ON THE BLACK SEA: An attack by a Russian petty officer on a battery of six Rumanian guns**—*Drawing by E. Walker*

Daring attacks are constantly being made outside Odessa by saboteur troops who, at night, invade the enemy lines and attack troops and gun batteries. The Rumanians have suffered considerably from these night attacks. In the case illustrated here a Russian petty officer had put a body of Rumanian horsemen to flight and then went forward until he came on a battery of six guns. He found some large anti-tank grenades and used them in his attack. They landed in the very midst of the gun crews and a panic ensued, with the gunners running in all directions

**A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF PART OF THE CITY OF KHARKOV:** This shows Djerzinsky Square; in the centre is the new Industry Hotel, whilst on the right are the buildings of the Kharkov Regional Committee and the Communist Party of the Ukraine

*On left*—**THE BIG MODERNISED CITY OF KHARKOV**—*Drawing by E. G. Lambert*

This has been a German objective in their drive through the Ukraine. Last week it was directly threatened by the German thrust southwards by way of Poltava. No fewer than six railways converge on the city. The inner portion, mainly built in the eighteenth century, is now surrounded by factory areas built on the vacant spaces which surrounded the older city. These new areas have wide esplanades and are constructed in the modern concrete manner. Southwards, one of the railways connects with Slavianoserbsk, where the huge furnaces of a big metallurgical plant are to be found

**THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA AND THE SEA OF AZOV:** On the left flank of Marshal Budenny's army the Germans have advanced along the north shores of the Sea of Azov to Mariupol and beyond towards the very important centres of Taganrog and Rostov. The Crimea is now cut off from the rest of Russia, but it is still held by the Soviet armies, who have been fighting valiantly and who are supported in this part of the world by the Black Sea Fleet

A RUSSIAN FIGHTER RAMS A GERMAN BOMBER: The Russian is a Rata, and the German a Dornier Flying Pencil—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

# RUSSIAN FIGHTER TACTICS

## *The Deliberate Ramming of German Bombers by Russian Fighter Planes*

A SPECIALITY in which Russian fighter pilots are now indulging is the art of ramming enemy planes. This has almost become a cult with some dare-devil squadrons. The art of ramming consists of knocking off a vulnerable piece of your opponent's machine in mid-air and sending him spinning to earth. There are various methods by which this feat is accomplished, but the most approved (and also the most difficult) is to nibble off bits of the enemy bomber's tail with your whirling propeller blades. More than thirty cases of successful mid-air ramming have been reported by the Russians since the beginning of the war. It is admitted that Soviet airmen have sometimes lost their lives in this dangerous pastime, but to exchange a fighter plane for a bomber is considered a profitable exchange! The upper picture shows how a "reckless" pilot goes about the job of ramming: the tail unit is the vulnerable spot—to attack elsewhere would be suicide. The Russian fighter, nicely timing his dive, swoops on the tail of the bomber, and if luck is with him he can get away with very little damage to himself. The lower picture shows the more finished method of attack—by a series of "nibbles" at the tail.

A RUSSIAN FIGHTER PLANE NIBBLING OFF BITS OF A GERMAN BOMBER'S TAIL WITH HIS AIRSCREW! This is a more careful and precise method than the very risky attack shown in the upper picture—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

# THE NAVIGATOR

## The Key Man in a Bomber Aircraft

(See also pp. 112-13 of this issue)

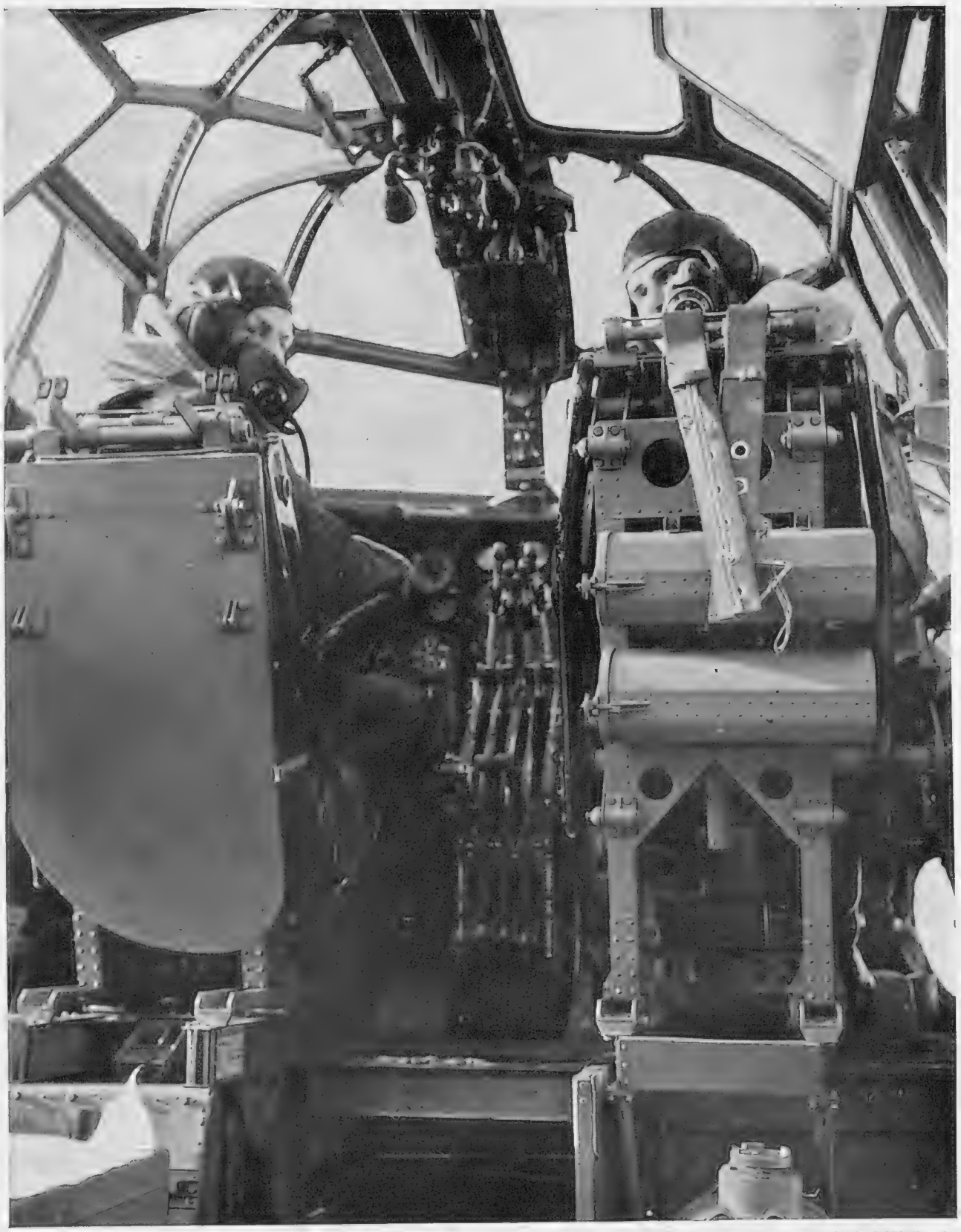
A BOMBER, unlike a fighter, is flown not only by the pilot but also by the air observer, the wireless operator and the air gunner. They form a team, and the success or failure of the flight depends on the closest and most intimate co-operation of all on board. The captain and his second pilot do the actual flying; the observer navigates and drops the bombs; the wireless operator helps the navigator and with the air gunner does the fighting. The same spirit and practice of co-ordination is required of a bomber crew as of the crew of a racing eight or the members of a football eleven.

The key man in a bomber aircraft is the navigator. His task is threefold. He must give his pilot the directions necessary to enable the bomber to reach the target at the right time; he must aim and release the bombs and he must bring the aircraft and its crew safely back to base. Under ideal conditions his task is not difficult; but conditions are rarely ideal. Darkness, clouds, air currents, all singly or together, are his foes.

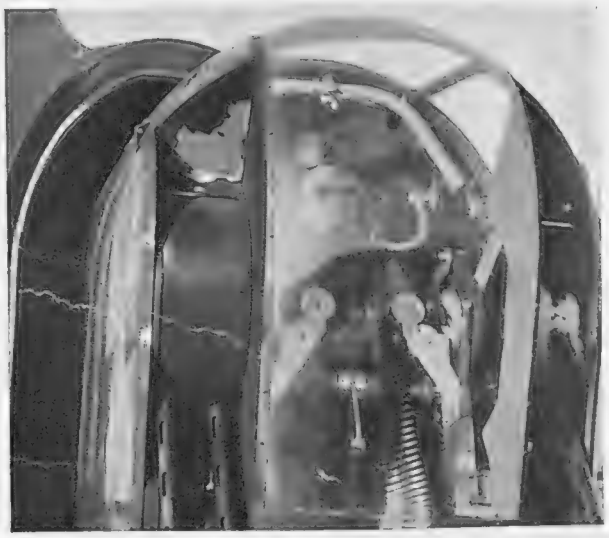
"The wind and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigator" runs a quotation from Gibbon upon the wall of the briefing-room of one bomber squadron. In the past many of the greatest sea navigators were British. To-day our air navigators are showing themselves to be worthy of their forbears.

Their other task is to aim the aircraft and drop the bombs from it. To hit a target is not easy. There is no barrel to direct the bomb as the rifle barrel directs the bullet. Bombs are not "projected"—that is, thrown—but "released"—that is, dropped. Moreover, they fall from something which is not stationary, but moving at a high speed.

—*Extracts from* Bomber Command



*Above*—THE TWO PILOTS OF A STIRLING HEAVY BOMBER AT THE CONTROLS. *On left*—THE NAVIGATOR AT WORK AT HIS TABLE WITHIN THE AIRCRAFT: He is the man who must take the huge aeroplane safely across hundreds of miles, find his exact target and then bring it back again, despite adverse weather conditions, "flak," and enemy night-fighters



ANOTHER VITAL MEMBER OF THE BOMBER CREW: The gunner, whose job is to protect the rear of the Stirling

THE MEN WHO BRING THE SUPPLIES : A scene in the engine-room of one of the coasting vessels which run between Alexandria and Tobruk

FOOD AND AMMUNITION FOR THE DEFENDERS : Many of the men had not been to sea before the war and most of the commanders were trawler skippers

# TOBRUK has been HELD FOR OVER SIX MONTHS

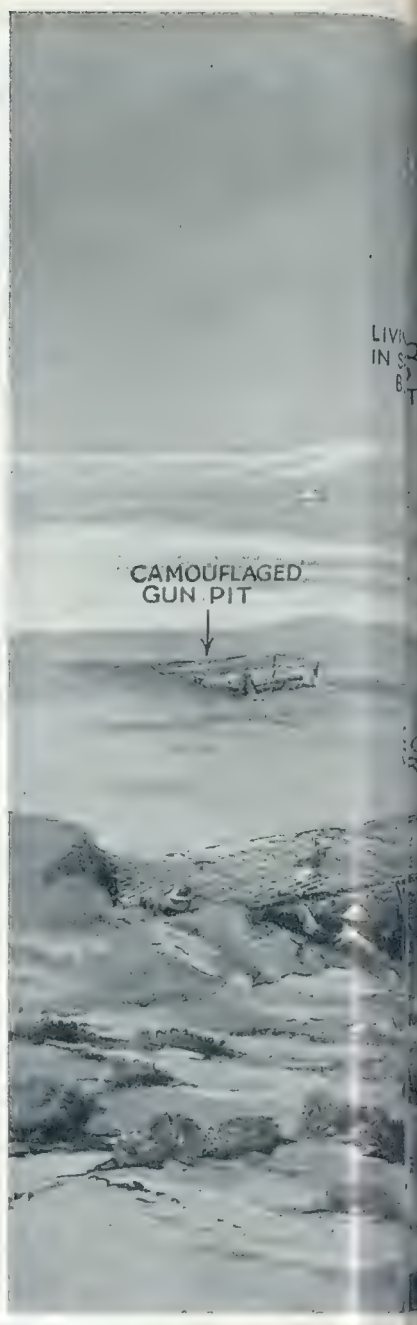
*How this Great Feat has been Accomplished and How the Stukas have been Defied*

TWO ITALIAN PRISONERS, taken by our men during the course of a patrol

FOR over six months now Tobruk has been held by British and Imperial Forces against the Italians and the Germans. And to-day it is stronger than ever it was : and this despite artillery bombardment and incessant dive-bombing attacks by Stukas. On April 11 the stronghold's "perimeter defences" were hastily closed : since then, only the sick and wounded have been able to leave Tobruk for Alexandria ; the rest of the Australians and British in the garrison have remained there without respite.

How has this great feat been accomplished ? Supplies have been brought by sea from Alexandria in small coasting vessels of the type depicted here. They have unloaded their cargoes of ammunition, food, water, etc., at small stone piers, despite the enemy aircraft : and the garrison have not wanted for anything within reason.

(Continued below on right)



Drawing by W. G. Whitele

HOW TOBRUK IS SUPPLIED WITH AMMUNITION, FOOD, ETC., BY SEA : Small steamers of the coasting type run from the base to the Tobruk landing-places (usually rough stone piers). The stores are then rapidly discharged into waiting lorries, as this is an anxious moment if an enemy plane should appear on the scene

**A DIAGRAM DEPICTING THE TYPES OF CAMOUFLAGE EMPLOYED BY THE TOBRUK DEFENDERS AND THE SYSTEM OF DUG-IN EMPLACEMENTS FOR GUNS AND BREN-GUN CARRIERS. By these and other means the men at Tobruk have been able to withstand artillery assaults and hundreds of dive-bombing attacks**—*Drawing by E. G. Lambert*

One of the principal difficulties to be solved by the defenders was that of camouflage. Flat as the desert is, any projection is bound to throw a strong shadow. Consequently, shadows mean concentrations!—and concentrations mean artillery bombardment or dive-bombing attacks. The infantry, therefore, live in caves beneath the ground: but not only the infantry—Bren-gun carriers and the guns, too, are "dug in" in the earth, in the manner shown above. All have been most carefully camouflaged with netting which conceals not only the positions *but the shadows too*! There have been hundreds of heavy bombardments and hundreds of attacks by dive-bombers—but very few exact targets! Unless a direct hit is scored, the shell or the bomb is wasted. The Italians have, therefore, invented a bomb with a sideways blast—so that if the missile fails to score a direct hit there is still a chance that it will cause havoc. But with men and most vehicles below ground-level this, too, is unlikely. It might be added that, generally throughout the desert, the hard rock and sand prevent bombs or shells from penetrating deep into the ground, and thus causing the huge craters to which we are accustomed in more fertile territory

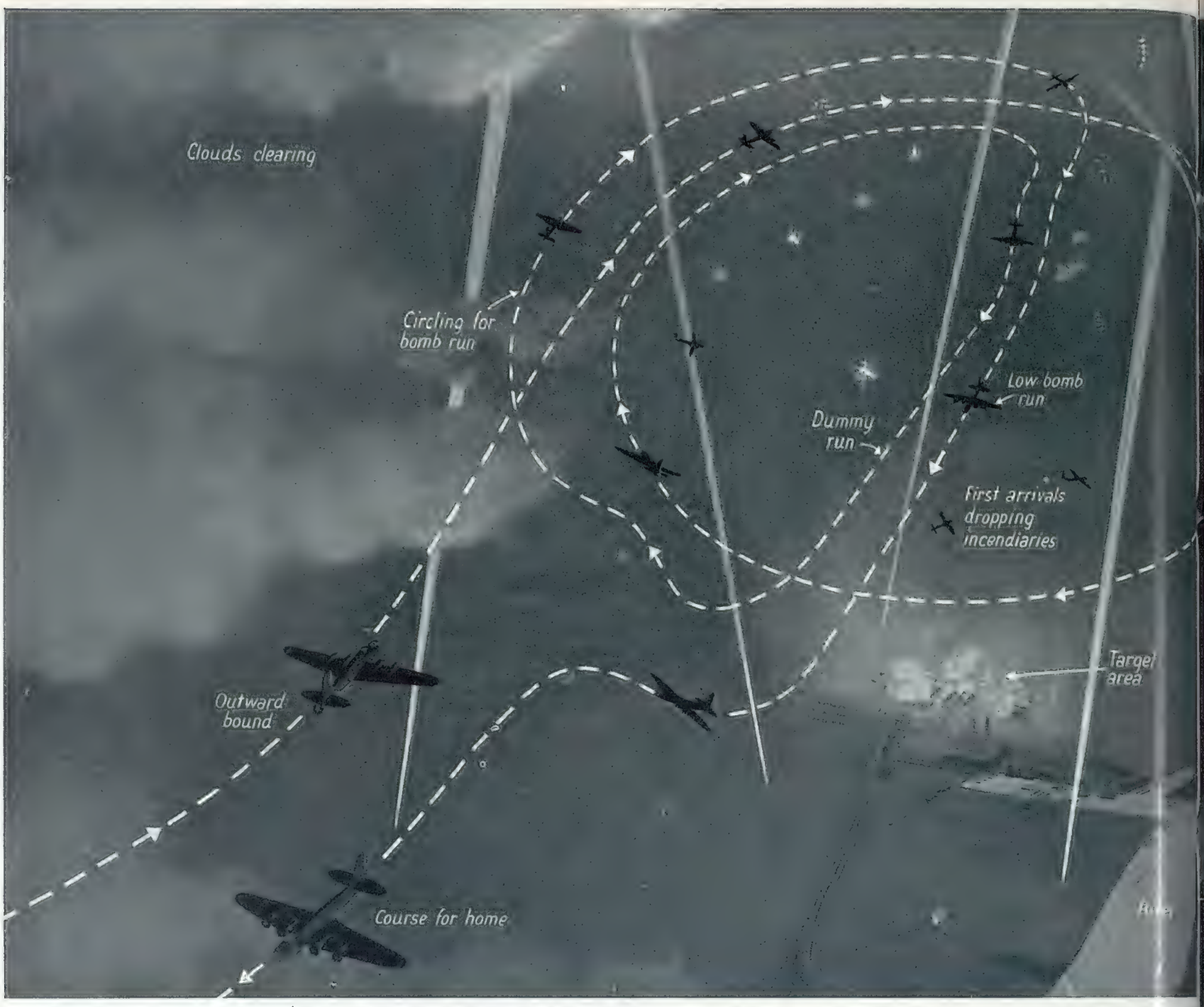
**ONE OF THE PITS DUG INTO THE GROUND:** Here is an anti-aircraft post in the desert. It has been sunk below the level of the surrounding country, and has been hidden from aircraft spotters and from artillery observation-posts by camouflage netting. The latter not only hides the post, but it also breaks up the deep shadows thrown by the sun. The gunners sleep by their gun: the look-out wakes them up when the enemy is signalled. Incidentally, the beds were captured from the Italians!

**THE HEAVIER VEHICLES AT TOBRUK ALSO HAVE THEIR "GARAGES":** It is not always possible to "bury" the big tanks and armoured cars in the same manner as the lighter vehicles. But, here again, camouflage netting has been employed with great effect. In this case the armoured car is in its partly-excavated "garage," with its machine-gun ready to assist in beating off an enemy air attack

(*Continued from above on left*)

How to protect the men and the vehicles and the gun positions was quite another problem. The desert is perfectly flat, with practically no natural cover. But caves abound: so, alas, do shadows. The problem of Tobruk was, therefore, one of camouflage. All gun positions, all sleeping quarters, and a number of the vehicles were consequently dug in below the level of the surrounding country. To camouflage these areas, and to kill the all-revealing shadow, some seven million yards of green scrim was sent out from England. This was painted in appropriate colours and hung in the desired positions. The result was the almost total disappearance from view of many a revealing object or shadow.

Coupled with the determination of the defenders, such means—and others of a more secret nature—have meant that for six months Tobruk has been able to withstand all Axis efforts to loosen our grip of this great desert stronghold.




**WITHIN THE TARGET AREA, THE AIRCRAFT FIRST CARRIES OUT A DUMMY RUN, THEN IT CIRCLES FOR A LOW BOMB RUN : the target has already been illuminated by incendiaries dropped by the first arrivals, and the bomb-aimer makes dead sure that he is right on his target before letting go**—*Drawing by L. Ashwell Wood*

Before dropping the bombs, the pilot circles the target under the direction of the bomb-aimer (who is now in virtual command of the aircraft) to check up on accuracy. The first arrivals ("Sproggs" as they are nicknamed by the R.A.F.) light up the target with incendiaries. The time has now come for the bombers to go in low on their bomb run. "Bombs gone, Sir!" comes from the rear gunner, full throttle is given, and then comes the climb out of the "flak" as a course is set for home by the navigator

# FINDING the TARGET

## *How Pilot and Bomb-Aimer Work Together*

Described by KENELM LOCKE

THE steady roar of the Merlins has been drumming in our ears for some time, and a note from the navigator says that we should soon be over the target. It 's damned cold up here, and the windscreen has been frosted over for some time.

Oil-pressure, height, engine revs., air speed, all O.K. They have been all along, touch wood. How I love this old crate.

"Alter course 5 deg. starboard," comes up from the navigator. The bomb-aimer is eagerly peering downwards through an occasional gap in the clouds below. As soon as he is sure of his target, he knows that from that moment the responsibility rests on him. He is the man who tells me where he wants the aircraft placed in order to get a bead on the target. I am merely a chauffeur and he gives all instructions. My job is to keep the old crate on an even keel at a constant speed and unvarying course.

We 're to be last over to-night, and soon we should be able to see the effect of old Monty and the crowd ahead, all being well. The anticipation always makes us feel that we should be miles ahead of where we are. I talk to myself. "Hold on, old chap! Control." Our hands are like ice and the dull drone of the engine is getting monotonous.

Better go down a bit and look under the clouds. Stick forward, throttle back a bit, must keep constant speed or old Alf's calculations will be upset. (Alf 's the navigator.)

Nobby, the tail gunner, must be fed up. Wonder if he 'll have any work to do to-night? He certainly lives in a world of his own—back of beyond.

Aha! Flickering lights ahead! Is it? Yes, it is. The front gunner gives a yell—that 's that. We 're getting warm, and now, clearly against the blackness, stabbing, clutching fingers are groping around, trying to pick out the others. The countryside is clearly laid out; sometimes I think objects stand out more clearly at night than day with the moonlight reflecting on dew-wet roofs. The railway lines seem to be picked out by the moonlight, and are a good guide. Slate roofs and corrugated iron are also easy to pick out; the flat ones are not so easy.

The clouds are clearing above, and over the target the skies seem clear. Better circle around a bit and see how the land lies. The target is a group of factory buildings on a railway siding. Should be easy to pick out, but the Huns are damned clever at camouflage, and we must be certain.

Ahead and to the left fires are breaking out. When they get a hold the whole lot should go up. Wonder how their A.R.P. fellows feel? Pretty scared, I think, for we often fly around for what seems hours before we unload—and when we do—oh, Boy!

The tall buildings and the big chimneys are not so easy to pick out as one would imagine, and the shadows they cast are most confusing. Occasional glimpses below give the impression of some "Lino Cut" effect in black and white, the rivers and canals always standing out clearly. The rest of the crowd seem to have plastered the target area pretty thoroughly. Are we a little late? Think I 'll just muck up the sidings properly. That should fix 'em. Trust Creepers to see to that. (He 's the bomb-aimer.) He 's always on all fours and the view we usually get of him is not his best.

Wonder if they have any night fighters up to-night; must have. Hope old Nobby is wide awake. Of course he is! He 's never let us down.

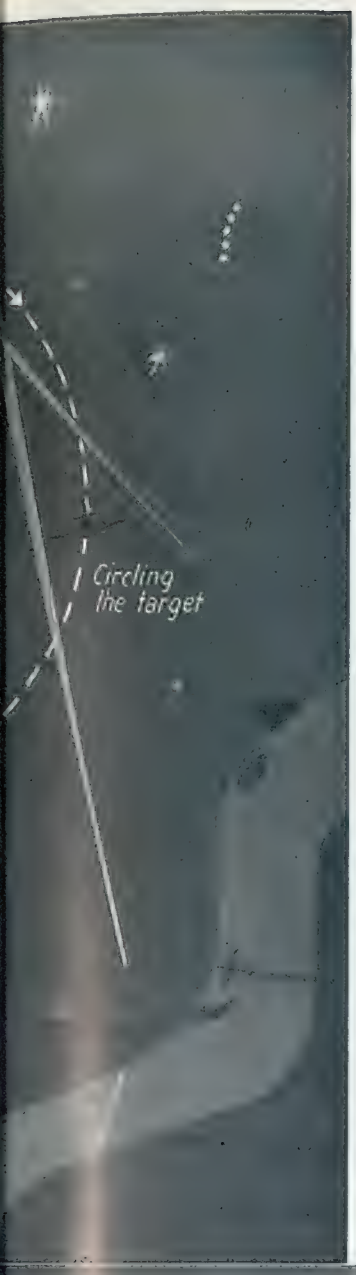
Searchlights are now trying to pick us out, and are weaving about the sky in desperate attempts to get us in their beams. I shout "O.K., Creepers, let 's make a dummy run!"

He gives me his instructions for a run up. Round we go. Bubble in the middle of the Turn and Bank indicator—funny, I never look at it these days. A couple of hundred hours ago my eyes would have been glued on it. CHRISTMAS!

The sudden splintering of the fuselage gives us all a jolt. We 've stopped a flying fragment. No serious damage, however, but it 's ripping in the slip stream. She 'll hold. We 've brought our crate back worse than this before.

***On right*—HOW THE BOMBS ARE RELEASED BY THE BOMB-AIMER LYING PRONE IN THE NOSE**—*Drawing by L. Ashwell Wood*

For the run-in over the target the aircraft is conned by the bomb-aimer, who signals to the pilot aloft. As the plane comes in, and the target comes up in the bomb-sights the bombs are released. This is done either singly, one after the other, or *en masse*. The bombs fall in the line of flight, forwards and downwards. The aircraft is, of course, progressing forwards, and would be over the bomb when stage 4 is reached. This is the most accurate method of bomb-dropping




Better watch out! Flak all over the place now, and coming up in a never-ending stream is all the stuff they can pump at us; flaming onions, tracers. It reminds one of the old cash containers the grocer used to have at home, running on wires to the cash desk. We're just like that cashier now, with containers coming up from every direction as on wires fastened to the old crate, but it's not cash they're bringing.

"O.K., Creepers!" I yell, "All set?"

"Steady, steady," he replies, "Right a bit, right a bit, 2 deg. starboard. Hold it, steady on that. O.K."

Old Creepers is now having his fun, and though I can't see his face I can just imagine it set in the light of the searchlights and flashes of Ack-Ack. We're being thrown about a bit now. Some near misses. Thank God their searchlight hasn't picked us out.

"HUN ASTERN," shouts Nobby over the R.T.

"O.K., Nobby, wait for it and then fix 'em," I reply. Waiting! waiting! The suspense is pretty grim. What's happening? Has he seen us? He must have done. Avoiding action? Yes. No. Hold it. B-r-r-r-t go Nobby's Brownings. B-r-r-r-r-t again, a long burst. No more. Steep turn to the right and then—see anything? Not a thing.

Nobby comes on the R.T. again:

"Beating 'em off, Sir. He's gone down. Don't know if I hit him or not, but it looked like it from the tracers. Over."

"Good lad, Nobby. Over."

Nobby is a good lad—never gets flustered. Wish we could look round and see if the Hun hits the deck. CHRISTMAS! What am I thinking about; let's get on with the job.

"O.K., Creepers, let's have another go. The real thing this time. Give 'em hell!"

Round we go again; hope that Hun doesn't pop up again. Round and down. Low this time, a wide sweep to have a good run; constant speed now; watch Creepers.

"O.K.?" I ask him.

"Left a bit," he signals. "Hold it steady; keep it at that." He is tensely studying his bomb sight, a complicated piece of machinery, but the best in the world as proved by results. This instrument works out all the details for him. He sets on it height, speed, etc., lays off for deflection, makes necessary allowances and, when he has fixed the target, presses the button and down they go.

He holds his thumb up telling me we're all set. Soon be over now, I think to myself. Hold it; any moment now; hope Nobby's keeping a good look-out; how much longer? Creeper seems to be taking hours. I look at my instruments. Height O.K.

"Bombs gone, Sir!" shouts Nobby.

Ah, well, that's that—now for home. Full throttle to get out of this. Steep turn, to see the effect first. Wonderful! Straddled 'em. Funny, the different colours one gets in the flames. All the colours of the rainbow, changing as the fire gets a hold on different materials.

Stick back, slowly now, and climb away. "Course for home," from the navigator, and off we go.

"Here is the news, etc. Last night our aircraft raided. . . . All our aircraft returned safely. One Nazi night fighter was destroyed and another probably damaged."

## GETTING the AIRCRAFT ON to the TARGET

THE bomb-aimer has no time for higher mathematics. He uses a bomb-sight on which he has set height, air-speed, size of bomb and other factors. This instrument automatically gives a correct aim. At the right moment the bomb is released and travels steadily towards the target.

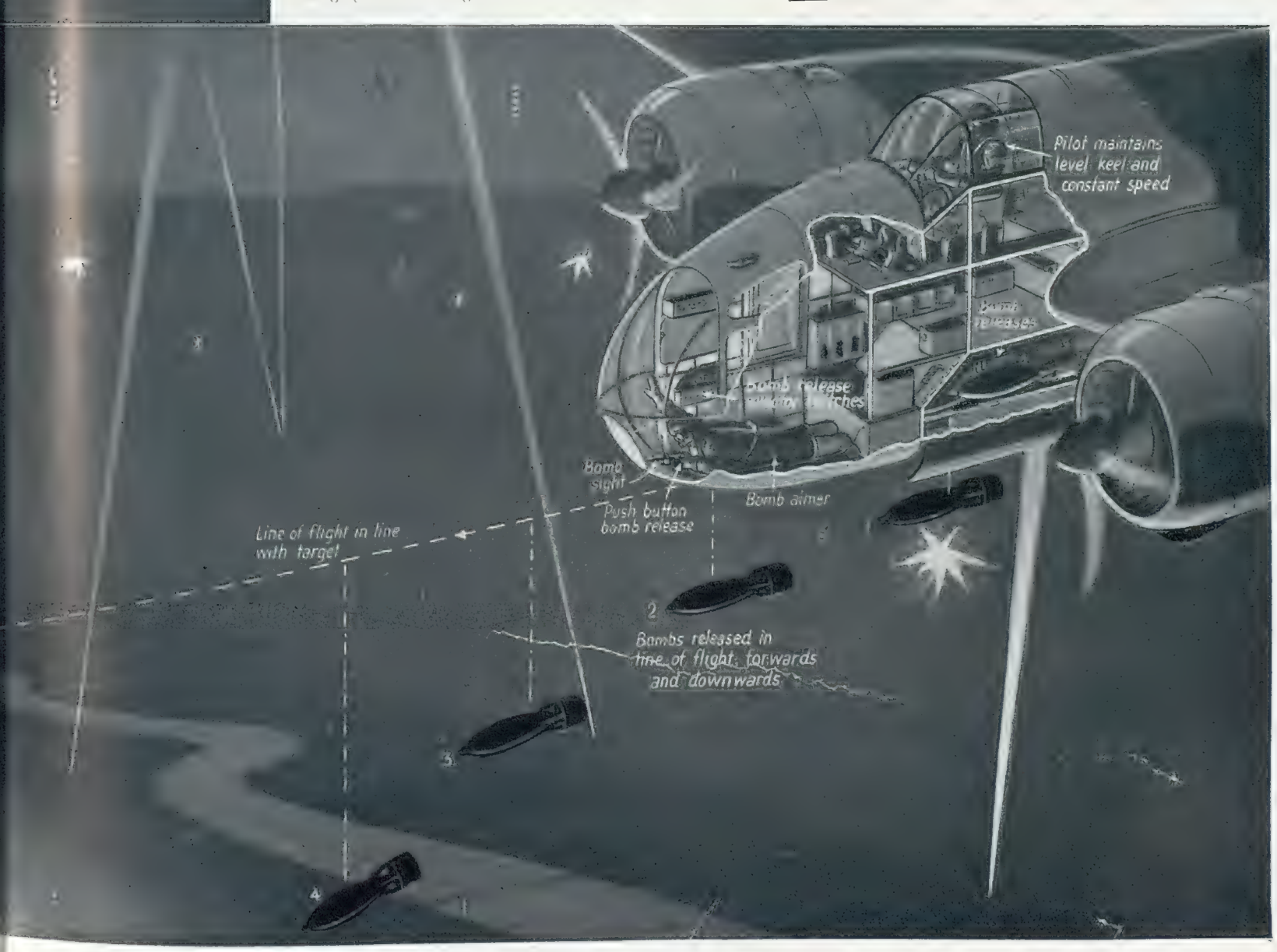
If the target is not easy to find, the pilot will be heard asking the navigator, who has now gone forward and is lying or sitting in the bomb-aiming position, his attitude depending on the type of aircraft, "Is it time to turn in?" or "Is it time to make our run?" Presently the navigator will say, "O.K., turn in." By this time the captain will have decided whether to attack direct or whether to make a gliding attack. In any case he is probably taking avoiding action—"jinking," as it is called—and is flying with engines de-synchronised.

A gliding attack tends to confuse the defences, whose sound-locators cannot pick up the aircraft. When making it the pilot announces his height every 200 ft. When about to turn in for the run the pilot will say, "Opening bomb doors." This is done hydraulically. As soon as they are open the navigator takes charge. He brings the aircraft on to the target by instructing the pilot how to steer. If he wishes him to turn to the left he will say, "Left, left," repeating the word. If, however, he wishes him to go to the right he will say "Right" once only. The reason for this is that there is often a considerable amount of crackling on the "inter-com" which makes it difficult to distinguish the exact words spoken.

A gliding attack lasts from four to five minutes. Presently the navigator will say "Steady," and the pilot will then hold the aircraft on its course until he hears the navigator say "Bombs gone." All this time the navigator has been gazing through the bomb-sight. Conveniently at hand are a number of switches by which he can control the manner in which the bombs are dropped. These may fall in a "close" or an "open" stick, that is, he can either let the bombs go simultaneously, in which case they will fall in a bunch, or one by one at short intervals.

The bomb-sight is so constructed that it can be automatically set to make allowance for the ground speed of the aircraft and the force and direction of the wind. If necessary, the bombs can be released automatically when the aircraft has reached a certain position indicated on the bomb-sight. They are also released by hand by means of pressure on a button. As soon as they have fallen the navigator reports "Bombs gone." In a gliding attack the pilot will continue to glide in order to leave the target unheard, if possible. Before he can close the bomb doors he has to open the throttle.

—*Extracts from* Bomber Command



**THE NEW ONSLAUGHT OF THE GERMAN U-BOATS IN THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC: The "Wolf Pack" formation which the enemy has now revived for his attacks on British shipping in the North Atlantic**—*Drawing by W. G. Whitaker*

Some time ago the Germans boasted of their new plan of campaign in the Atlantic—the adoption of the "wolf pack" formation for their U-boats. It would now appear that this method of attack has been revived, and the German submarines are once again said to be hunting in packs, with the vast amount of war material coming from the United States as their objective. For this method, the U-boats are arranged in a semi-circle in front of the oncoming convoy. They are directed to their quarry by Kurier and Condor aircraft, which can sight the merchantmen without themselves being seen and then transmit by wireless the position and speed of the convoy to the U-boat commanders lurking below. Especially when the weather is bad, it is difficult to spot the tell-tale periscope; but British and American destroyers, equipped with the most modern detection devices and powerfully armed, are shepherding the convoys. And there is now the further protection afforded by the fighter aircraft which are being catapulted from the merchantmen's decks (*See also drawing on next page*)

# CATAPULTING FIGHTERS FROM MERCHANTMEN

A Note by Donald Cowie

THE news that some of our merchant ships have been equipped with fighter aircraft, to be released by catapult on sight of a German bomber, and that one of them has already fulfilled its purpose by shooting down a surprised raider, is news of first-rate tactical importance. And it points to a most fascinating story.

Once again it is a story, primarily, of British enterprise and martial inventiveness. As we were first in the field with the aircraft-carrier proper, so we pioneered the catapult method of releasing aircraft at sea. But the original experiments were conducted on land, in 1916, when the Royal Flying Corps launched a small plane from a lorry, using an apparatus worked by compressed air for the purpose.

That side—the land side of catapulting—has never been abandoned, it may be added, and just before the war the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough was developing catapults for heavy bombers, the idea being to eliminate large aerodromes, and to enable the pay-load of aircraft to be increased. The Mayo composite plane was an interesting side-show of this endeavour.

But it was the Navy that put most of the ideas into everyday practice first. Warships were equipped with simple catapult apparatus. We all know about the mechanism: how, running across the ship from side to side, it consisted of rails, supporting a trolley, supporting the simple little wing-folding aircraft. Underneath the rails were cylinders filled with compressed air by an engine, and the trolley was connected to these, so that when the air was released so was the trolley.

But it must be admitted that the device did not advance beyond that stage for many years, and certain drawbacks of it were found difficult to overcome. The greatest difficulty was getting the plane back to the ship after its short flight. There was, apparently, only one way, and that was generally adopted. The aircraft alighted on the sea near the ship and was hauled aboard by a crane. But such a delicate operation could hardly be carried out in a rough sea.

Then there was a notion, widely-discussed before the war, that ships' aircraft might be provided with their own "catapults," in the form of attached rockets. Only the rails would be needed then, and not the space-occupying compressed-air apparatus.

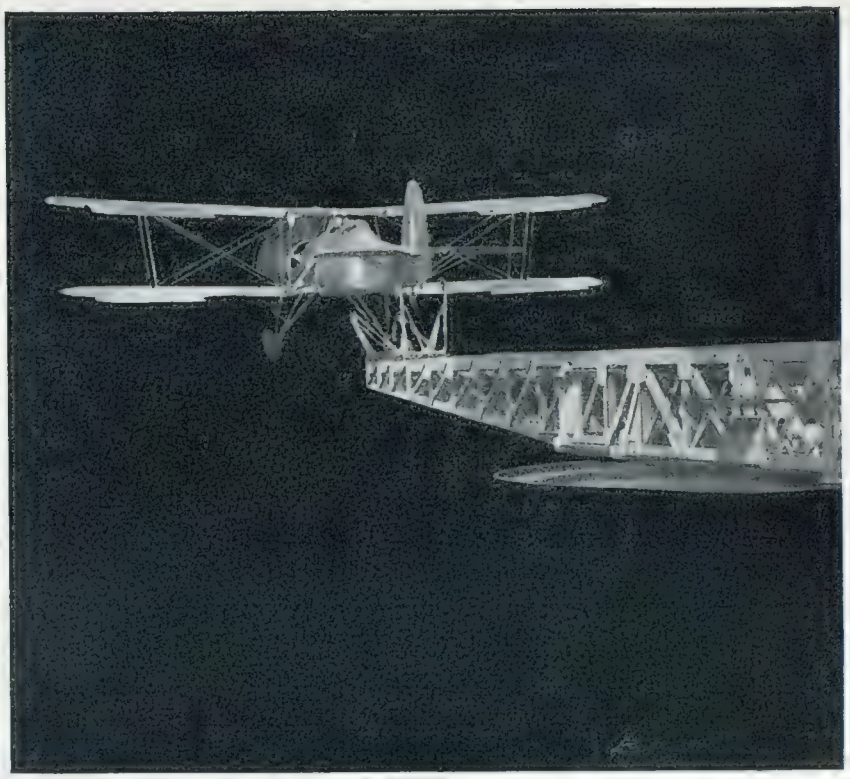
But, whatever the mechanical method adopted, there is no doubt that the use of aircraft on merchantmen is the logical reply to the Nazi air-war on shipping. To send fighters as escorts for all convoys and valuable ships is impracticable. But if the main ships in each convoy could *carry* a fighter, then the solitary Focke-Wulfs would soon begin to think twice before attacking them.

*On left*—

**AUTOMATIC RADIO SETS TO SAVE THE LIVES OF BRITISH SEAMEN**—*Drawing by William McDowell*

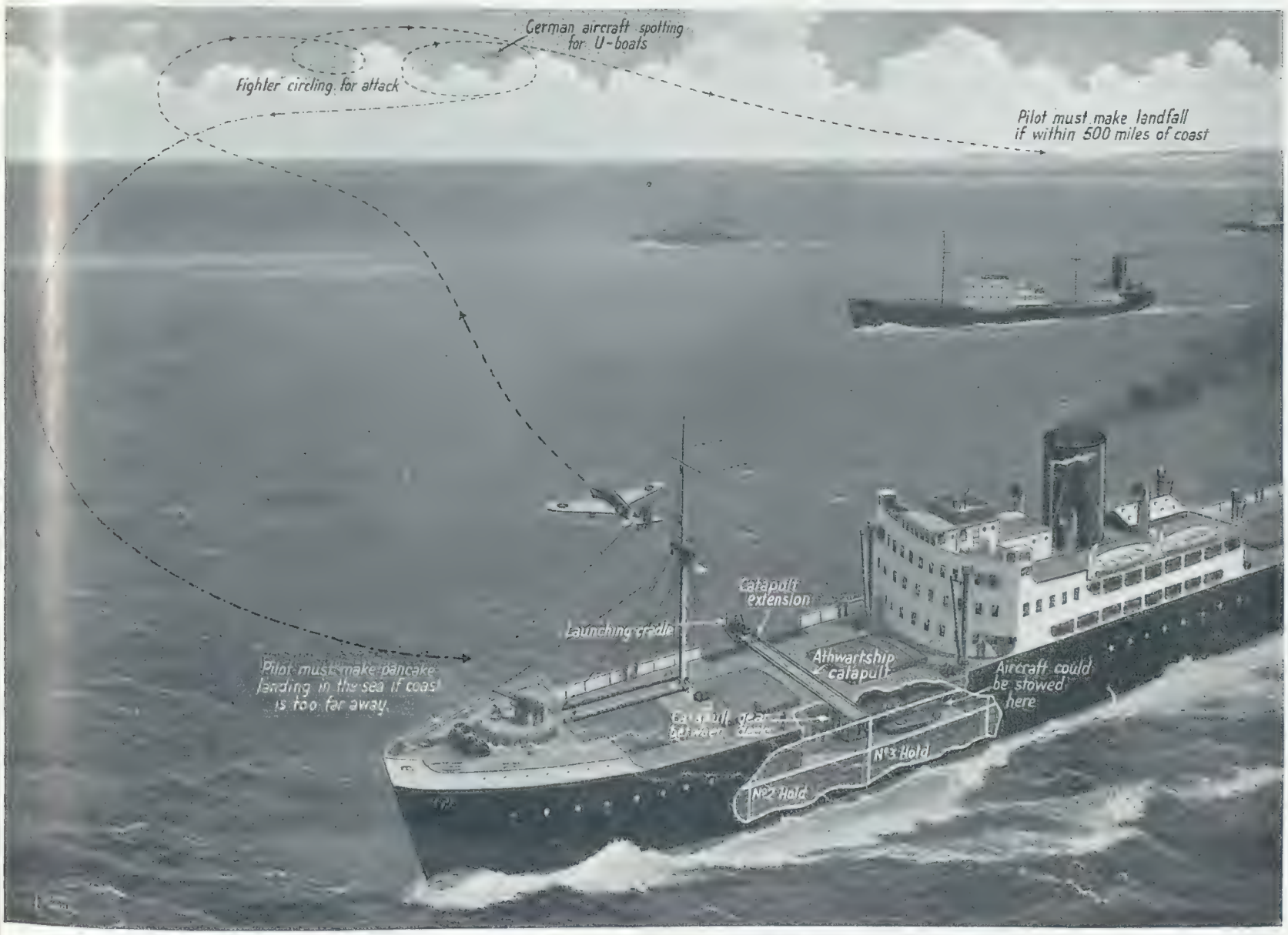
A recent order by the Minister of War Transport has made it compulsory for ships' lifeboats and rafts to be fitted with portable radio transmitters. Already this apparatus has saved hundreds of lives. The portable transmitter originated by the Ministry sends out automatic distress signals and can be operated by unskilled persons. In the drawing *on the left* the boat, unable to be pulled or sailed in the heavy swell running, is being kept head on to the sea while a signal for help is being sent out on the portable transmitter. A simple aerial has been rigged up on the boat's mast

**HOW AN AIRCRAFT IS CATAPULTED : In this case it is a Swordfish. A similar method is adopted for the fighters sent off from the decks of merchantmen**



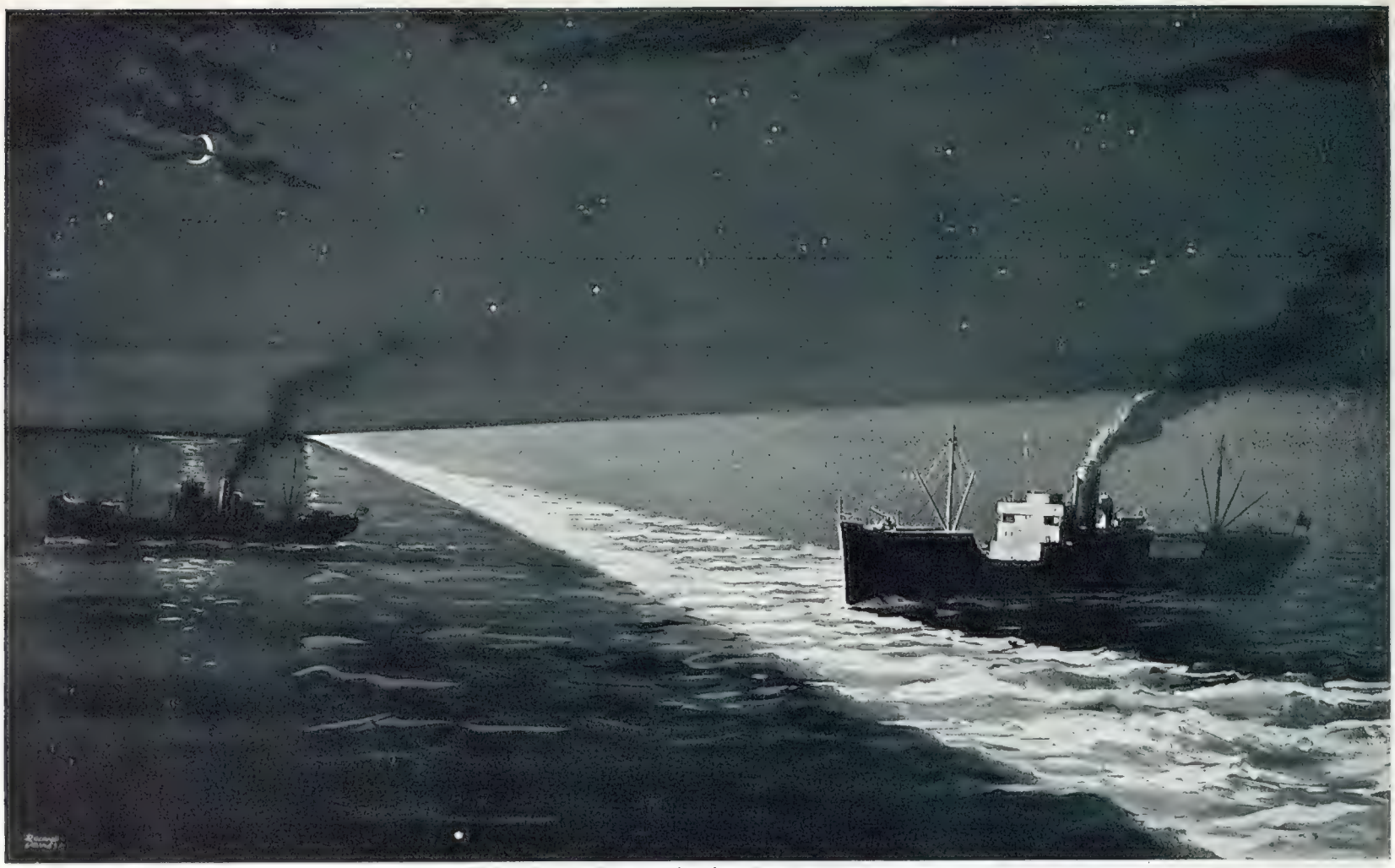
**ANOTHER VIEW OF A SWORDFISH AIRCRAFT BEING CATAPULTED**

New methods of protection for shipping have been put into operation in order to deal with the enemy long-range aircraft which attack ships and report the movements of shipping to U-boats. Certain ships have been fitted with catapults and provided with fighter aircraft which can be catapulted into the air to deal with enemy aircraft shadowing or attempting to attack. After shooting down or driving off enemy aircraft, the fighter lands at a shore base if there is one within range. If not, the pilot has to land in the sea as close to the ship as possible in order to be picked up. The fighters are piloted in some cases by pilots of the Fleet Air Arm and in others by pilots of the Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force who have volunteered for this special duty




**HOW BRITISH FIGHTER AIRCRAFT ARE CATAPULTED OFF MERCHANTMEN AT SEA TO ENGAGE ENEMY AIRCRAFT SPOTTING FOR U-BOATS**—*Drawing by L. Ashwell Wood*

Pilots are now being catapulted from freighters to fight off the German Focke-Wulf Kurier aircraft which spot our convoys far out in the Atlantic. This vessel is a cargo liner of some 10,000 tons. After combat, pilots must get back to land if within 500 miles of the coast, otherwise they must make a pancake landing on the sea as close to the ship as possible in order to be picked up. This new method of defence at sea has already proved successful both in averting attacks and in destroying German long-range aircraft



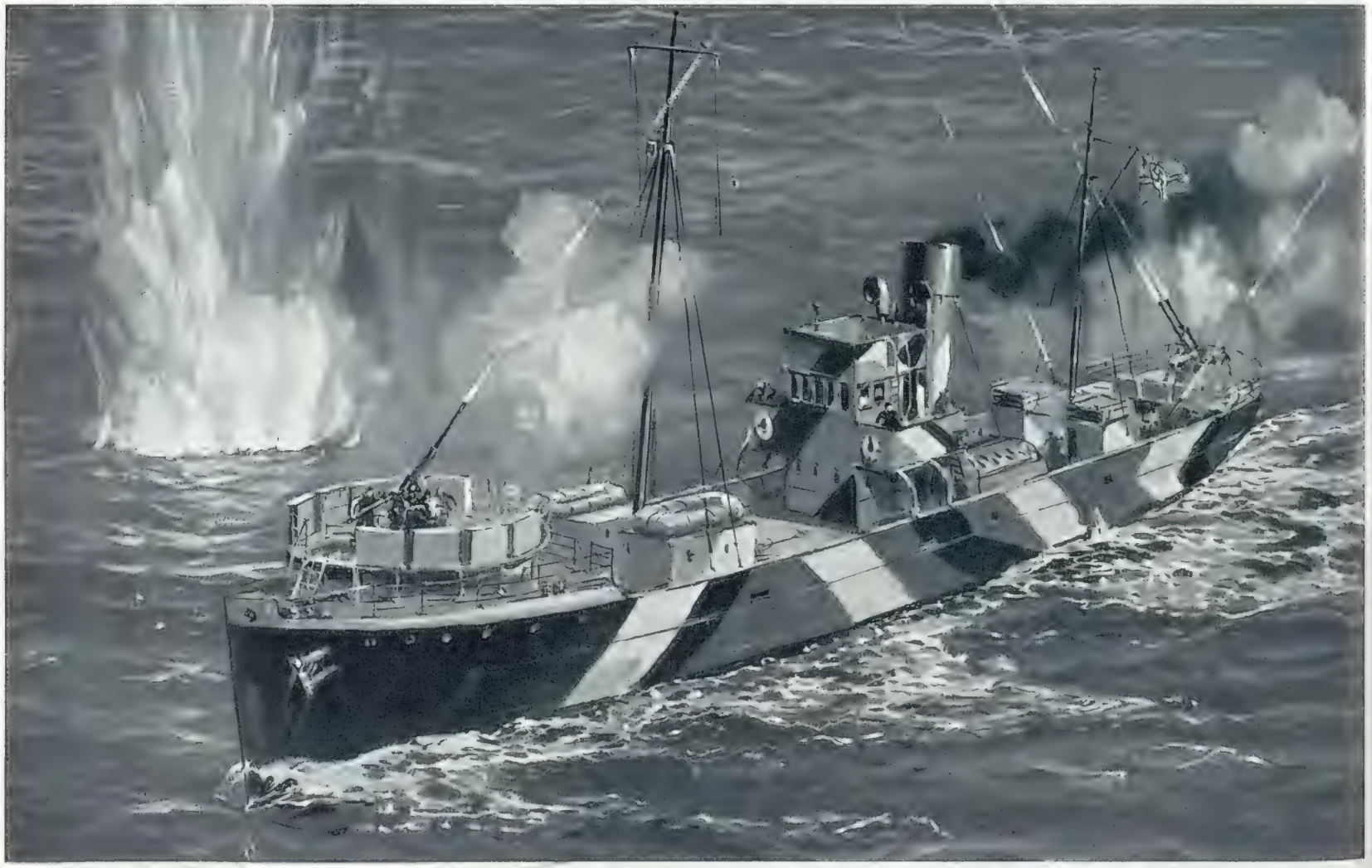
THE UNEASY GERMANS ON THE FRENCH COAST KEEP WATCH ACROSS THE CHANNEL

## A NEW USE for SEARCHLIGHTS

### The Germans Light up the Channel Across the Straits of Dover

*—Drawing by Roland Davies*

German searchlight crews have recently been collaborating with German long-range batteries during the night in a spasmodic ninety minutes' bombardment across the Straits of Dover. They swept powerful beams low over the water, probing the darkness. It was the first time the enemy had used searchlights in this manner from the French coast. One beam swinging slowly to and fro was stronger than the rest—it came from Cape Gris-Nez. People watching from the Kent coast more than 20 miles away saw the glare. The crash of the shells rocked houses in coastal towns on this side of the Channel



THE FLUGABWEHRKANONE—or "Aeroplane warding-off Gun"—or "Flak" Ship

## A GERMAN "FLAK" SHIP

### What One of These Specialised Naval Vessels Looks Like in Action

*—Drawing by William McDowell*

This typically made-up German name is far too long for the R.A.F., who quite early in the war gave to the anti-aircraft guns and the special A.-A. ships used by the Nazis along the German and Dutch coasts the abbreviated name of "flak." The "flak" ship is, in effect, a mobile floating anti-aircraft battery, and numerous small craft—such as trawlers—have been converted for the purpose. We ourselves have a number of similar vessels, although it is not the British custom to suggest that we have created something new when such, in fact, is *not* the case! The ship in the picture looks like a Dutch trawler adapted for special A.-A. duties. This particular vessel was located off the Dutch coast and attacked at sea-level by Blenheims of the R.A.F. Bomber Command. The rear gunner of the ship is firing at one of the British aircraft which has already delivered its attack, whilst the gunners in the bows are aiming at other oncoming Blenheims. The ship was afterwards seen to blow up

**GENERAL LORD GORT, WITH THE FRENCH GENERAL GEORGES:** The B.E.F. was under the command of Lord Gort, V.C., but he in turn was under the command of the French General Georges, who was in charge of the French Front of the North East. This picture was taken at British G.H.Q. at Arras on January 8, 1940, when General Gort was invested with the Grand Croix of the Legion of Honour by General Georges

The publication of

# THE GORT DESPATCHES FOR 1939-40

## *The Full Story of the Battles in Belgium and France, which Culminated in the Epic of Dunkirk*

—Told with the Help of Lord Gort's Own Sketch-maps, and with Pictures from Official Sources

THE story of the Dunkirk evacuation—that epic of land, sea and air—has long been known, and is to-day part of British history. But the details of the three weeks' battle which preceded it have never yet been set forth in continuous and authoritative form until now, when, with the publication of Lord Gort's official Despatches, the whole narrative is given to the world. No man or woman of British birth will read it without the profoundest emotion and pride.

Briefly, owing to a break-through upon a part of the Allied line remote from their own, the B.E.F. found themselves involved almost from the start in what amounted to a continuous rearguard action, in which the situation deteriorated day by day, and means had to be devised, almost from hour to hour, to deal with this emergency or that.

Yet nowhere throughout the whole of these most difficult and harassing operations can we detect any loss either of head or heart on the part of the British troops, or of the men who led them. Their lines of communication were cut; they were hungry and lacking essential equipment; Allied support failed them upon either flank; yet they fought their way unbroken to the Straits of Dover, and delivered some 80 per cent. of their strength from the enemy's grasp.

**Flanders Once More.**—The Despatch begins inevitably with an interesting comparison between the conditions under which the British Expeditionary Force was conveyed to France in September 1939 and those prevailing in August 1914. Time had marched on, and avoidance of concentrated air attack was now an overwhelming consideration. Calais and Boulogne were held to be out of the question as main landing ports, so Cherbourg, Nantes, St. Nazaire and Brest were selected.

The move to France was begun on September 10, and was completed, thanks to the elaborate and secret nature of the precautions taken, exactly on schedule time without loss of a man.

After being collected in their assembly area between Le Mans and Laval, the British proceeded to their allotted sector, and on the agreed date, October 3, the 1st Corps were in position upon the Belgian frontier.

It should be noted that Lord Gort's was not an independent command: he was under the orders of General Georges, Commander of the French Front of the North East.

The British sector followed the frontier from the village of Maulde to the village of Halluin, and thence the River Lys to Armentières—familiar territory to many a British veteran. The sector covered Tourcoing, Courtrai and Lille. Lord Gort established his Headquarters at Arras, or, rather, in the village of Hàbarcq, eight miles to the west. The new conditions of warfare had rendered necessary the widest possible dispersion, not merely of the troops in any given area, but of Headquarters staffs as well.

**NOTE**—In all the maps on these four pages the various forces have been indicated as follows: **British,** by horizontal shading; **French,** by shading slanting from left to right; **Belgian,** by shading slanting from right to left

**Problems of Defence.**—The winter was spent in the construction of a line of strong defences in depth along the Franco-Belgian frontier. From every point of view it would have been preferable to have sited these defences along the German-Belgian frontier, thus prolonging the Maginot Line to its logical conclusion as a continuous rampart against German invasion. But the Belgian Government adhered to a policy of the strictest neutrality. It was understood that defensive works in the form of tank-obstacles

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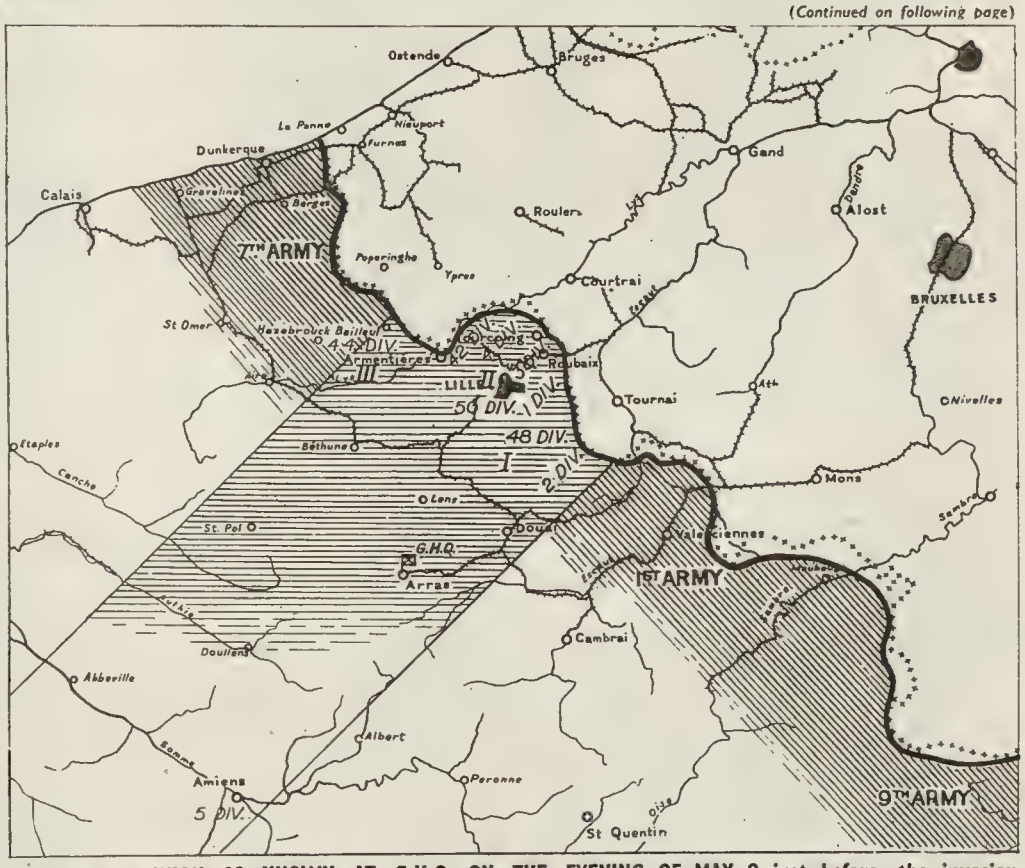
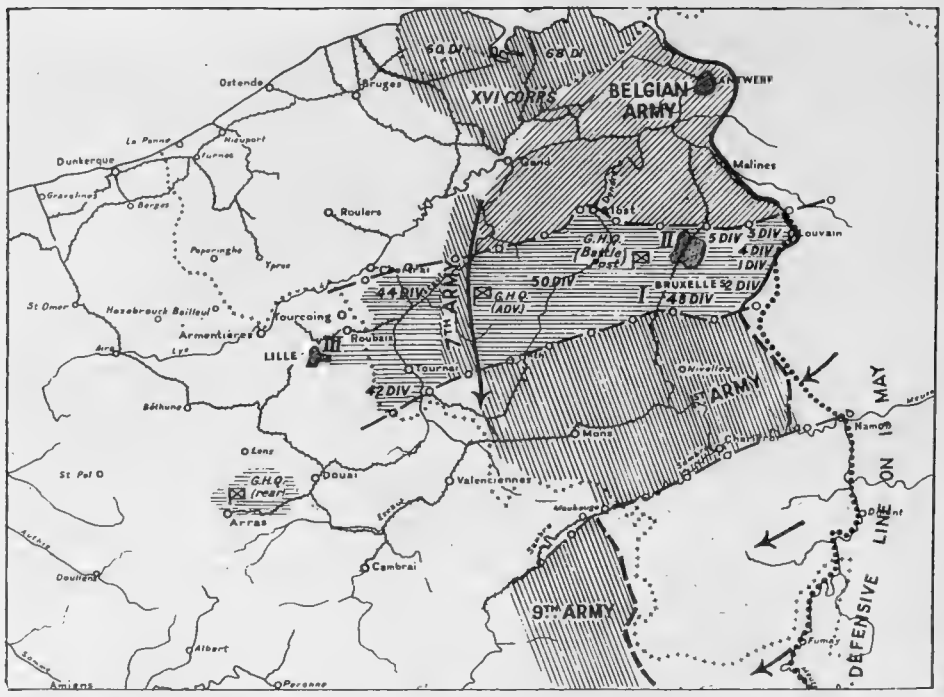


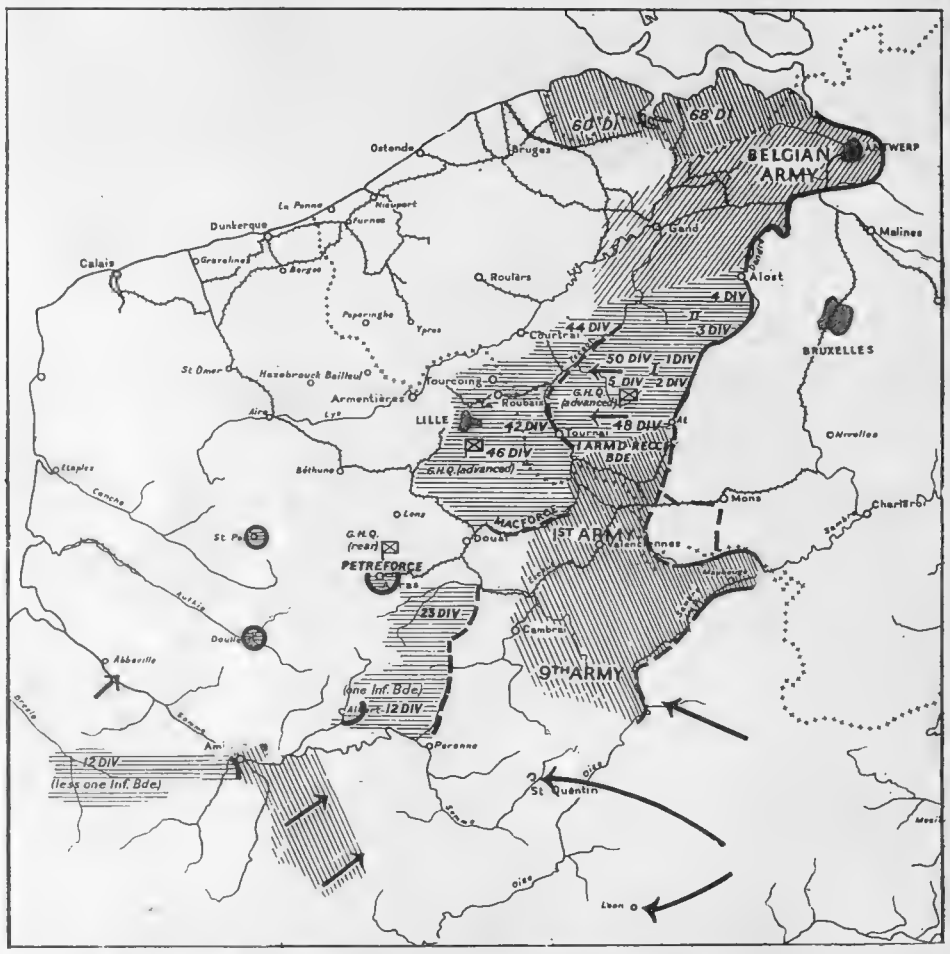

**I. THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q. ON THE EVENING OF MAY 9 just before the invasion of Holland and Belgium by the Germans:** The British zone is indicated by horizontal shading, with the lines of communication running back—not to the Channel ports, as might perhaps have been expected—but down to Havre. On the British left was the French 7th Army, and on its right the French 1st Army

**THE KING'S VISIT TO THE BRITISH FRONT IN DECEMBER 1939—On left, with French generals and, on right, with the heads of the French State**

"On 4th December," states Lord Gort in his First Despatch, "his Majesty the King visited his troops in France and was received everywhere with enthusiasm. During the three days' tour his Majesty was able to make a detailed inspection of forward and rear areas." In the first picture the King is seen with General Fagalde, on extreme left; General Giraud; and General Pagosy (on right). In the second picture King George is seen after lunch at the Restaurant Godbert in Amiens on the British Lines of Communications; with him is President Lebrun and M. Daladier (then the French Premier) and General Lord Gort, V.C., Commander-in-Chief of the B.E.F.




**II.** **THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 16 (EVENING):** "On 15th May the Dutch Army laid down its arms; the immediate effect of this on the operations of the B.E.F. was small, for the British forces operating in Holland had at no time been under my command. I anticipated, however, that this would come as a shock to the Belgian Army. The French 7th Army withdrew its advanced formations to the neighbourhood of Antwerp and on this day ordered divisions to move across my rear to fill the gap created further south. This move, however, did not take place till some three days later, when it was accomplished with little delay to our own movements. On this day (15th May) I established a command post at Lennick St. Quentin, 6 miles west of Brussels"




**III.** **THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 18 (MORNING):** Arras and G.H.Q. (rear) were guarded by the "Petreforce" under Major-General R. L. Petre. Advanced G.H.Q. was located near Lille, but moved back later in the day. At the same time, to guard against an immediate threat to Gort's right flank a force was organised under Major-General Mason-MacFarlane (Director of Military Intelligence) to cover the crossings over the Scarpe. "It had now to be decided whether or not the withdrawal from the Senne to the Dendre was to begin on the night of the 17th/18th May, and the situation in the south was such that I felt that to spend a day on the Senne would be to risk being outflanked on the right and so imperil the force under my command to no good purpose"

**NOTE**—In all the maps on these pages the various forces have been indicated as follows: **British,** by horizontal shading; **French,** by shading slanting from left to right; **Belgian,** by shading slanting from right to left

## THE BELGIAN ARMISTICE, May 28

"During 27th May," wrote Lord Gort, "I received a further telegram from the Secretary of State which read, '. . . want to make it quite clear that sole task now is to evacuate to England maximum of your force possible.' It was therefore very necessary to discuss further plans with General Blanchard. . . . I had no idea what plans either he or Admiral Abrial had in mind.

". . . I failed to find him at La Panne, so I went on to Bastion No. 32 at Dunkirk to visit Admiral Abrial, only to find that both he and General Fagalde were equally unaware of his whereabouts.

"Whilst at the Bastion General Koeltz asked me, shortly after 11 p.m., whether I had yet heard that H.M. the King of the Belgians had asked for an armistice from midnight that night. This was the first intimation I had received of this intention, although I had already formed the opinion that the Belgian Army were now incapable of offering serious or prolonged resistance to the enemy. I now found myself with an open gap of 20 miles between Ypres and the sea through which enemy armoured forces might reach the beaches.

"Owing to the congestion on the roads, I did not get back to my headquarters at Houtkerque until about 4.30 a.m. on 28th May. There I found that a telegram had been received from the War Office at 1.30 a.m. saying that H.M. the King of the Belgians was capitulating at midnight."

**MAJOR-GENERAL R. L. PETRE, who commanded the 12th Division; and later, a force known as "Petreforce"**

**MAJOR-GENERAL F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE (Director of Military Intelligence), who commanded a force known as "Macforce"**

**MAJOR-GENERAL H. E. FRANKLYN, who commanded the 5th Division, and later was placed in command of all the troops round Arras known as "Frankforce"**

**MAJOR-GENERAL H. O. CURTIS, Commander of the 46th Division in the Lines of Communication Area in France, and later of the force known as "Polforce"**

## The GORT DESPATCHES *(cont.)*

*On left*—**THE KING WITH GENERAL GAMELIN in the Maginot Line in December 1939**

were under construction in Eastern Belgium, but nothing was known for certain. The Belgian Government, anxious not to compromise their position of neutrality, resolutely declined either to hold joint staff conferences with the Allies, or to permit Allied officers to enter Belgium and reconnoitre possible position.

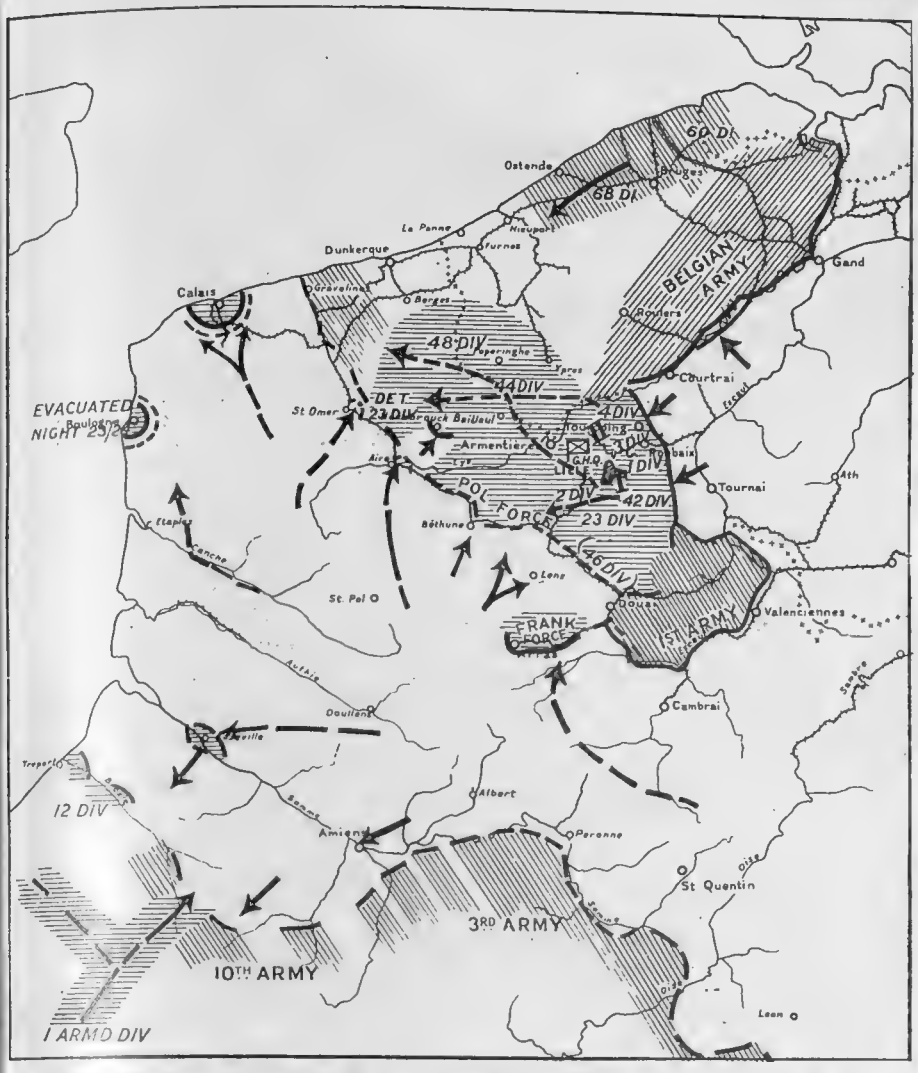
By the end of January the B.E.F. in France stood at 222,000 men—two corps of three divisions each, with other troops. Bases had been established, and our lines of communication extended from the Belgian frontier, in a south-westerly direction through Amiens, to seventeen ports in western and southern France.

Various defence schemes had been considered and decided upon, so far as the aloof attitude of the Belgian Government permitted—with the French High Command. But plainly Lord Gort, confident though he was in his men, was far from happy about the equipment situation, and on several occasions he called the attention of the War Office to shortages of guns, ammunition and various technical apparatus.

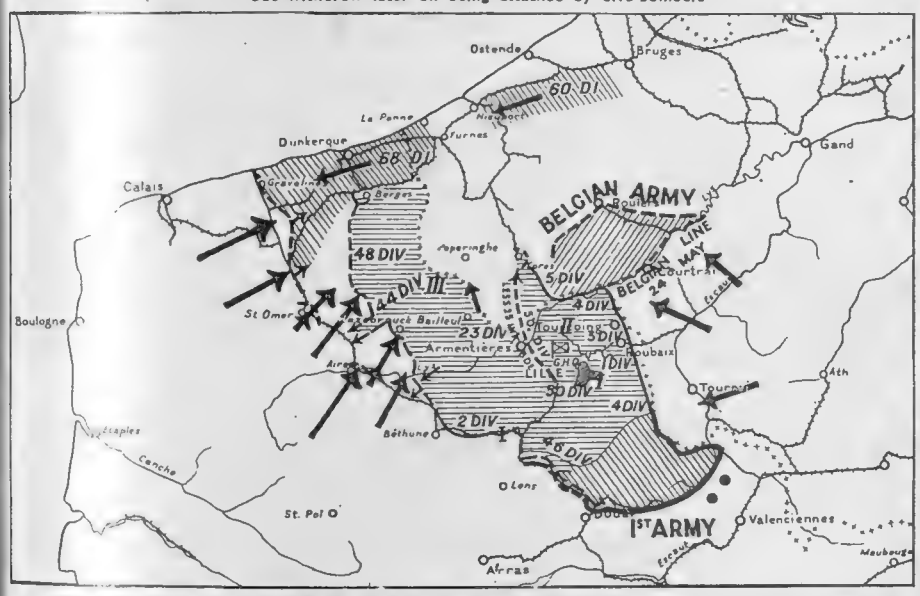
**Blitzkrieg.**—The storm broke upon May 10, 1940, with the simultaneous violation of Dutch and Belgian neutrality by the Germans, and the invasion in immense force of both these countries.

Belgium immediately called upon the Allies for assistance, and the B.E.F., together with the French 1st Army on its right, crossed the frontier that day, proceeding at speed for sixty miles, amid the cheers of the Belgian population, to a selected position along the little River Dyle, which runs north and south through Louvain, east of Brussels.

These positions had barely been reached when grave news began to come in. The Belgians had failed to demolish important bridges upon their own eastern frontier, and were falling back, pressed by the enemy. Next day, May 12, came a rumour that the French 9th Army, upon the right of the French 1st Army, opposite the Ardennes at Sedan, was giving way before a




**IV.** **THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 23 (AFTERNOON) :** "On 23rd May the French 1st Army pushed forward some elements southwards from Douai. On the same day, 5th and 50th Divisions, which had attacked two days before, were themselves being attacked on the Scarpe and had already lost most of their tanks through mechanical wear. The threat to their rear was increasing hourly, and they were thus unable to make any further advance or to assist the French, except in so far as they were able to engage troops who might otherwise have threatened the right flank of the French advance. The French approached the outskirts of Cambrai meeting with little opposition but withdrew later on being attacked by dive-bombers"




**V.** **THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 26 (MID-DAY) :** "By 6 p.m. that night (25th May) I was convinced that the steps I had taken to secure my left flank would prove insufficient to meet the growing danger in the north. The pattern of the enemy pincer attack was becoming clearer. One movement from the south-west on Dunkirk had already developed and was being held ; the counterpart was now developing on the Belgian front. The gap between the British left and the Belgian right, which had been threatening the whole day, might at any time become impossible to close : were this to happen, my last hope of reaching the coast would be gone. At this time, it will be recalled, I had no reserves beyond a single cavalry regiment, and the two divisions (5th and 50th) already earmarked for the attack southwards"

**LIEUT.-GENERAL H. R. POWNALL : "Some were required with their staffs to bear a specially heavy and prolonged strain of responsibility, and I wish to refer particularly to the valuable services of my Chief of the General Staff (Lieut.-General H. R. Pownall) . . ."**

**MAJOR-GENERAL R. P. PAKENHAM-WALSH, Engineer-in-Chief, to whom a special tribute is paid**

**MAJOR-GENERAL G. LE Q. MARTEL, 50th (Motor) Division, who arrived in France in February 1940**

**MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL AT G.H.Q. ON NOVEMBER 5, 1939, with General Lord Gort, V.C., C.-in-C., and Lieut.-General (now Sir Henry) Pownall, Chief of the General Staff. Mr. Churchill visited G.H.Q. again two months later**

thrust by German armoured divisions. It was more than a rumour; it was the tragic truth. The French 9th Army disintegrated completely, and within a few days German tanks and armoured cars were pouring through a gap twenty miles wide, heading straight for the French coast, and threatening to sever the Allied forces (including the B.E.F.) in the north from the main body of the French Army to the south.

Meanwhile, measures were being taken to re-establish the situation in Belgium, which had been rendered difficult by the retirement under pressure of the Belgian Army. A conference was held at Mons on the afternoon of May 12, when it was agreed that the French General Billotte should co-ordinate the dispositions of the B.E.F., the Belgian Army and the French 1st and 7th Armies.

So for a short time the Dyle line was held, and with some promise of success. But events elsewhere were moving too fast. On May 15 the Dutch laid down their arms, creating a new source of danger in the north. It was obvious, too, that the French 1st Army on our right could not hold on to their present position much longer. Owing to the dissipation of the French 9th Army, their right flank was "in the air."

**The Gap.**—It was therefore decided to abandon the Dyle position and fall back, in accordance with a prepared plan, to the River Escaut, sixty miles westward. This difficult withdrawal was completed by May 19. But the gap to the south remained, and was growing wider. Enemy troops had penetrated as far as Amiens, and were getting astride the British lines of communication, which, it will be remembered, reached diagonally across France to the south-west, instead of running straight back to the Channel. German armoured vehicles actually reached Boulogne as early as May 21.

Plainly, the situation could only be restored by strong counter-attacks across the gap. The initiative and principal effort must come from the south side, where French G.Q.G. and the main French forces were situated. But precious hours and days passed; it did not mature. True, after the supersession of General Gamelin by General Weygand, a scheme, known as the Weygand plan, was formulated. But it was never put into execution. The situation had deteriorated too swiftly.

**The British Effort.**—Thus Lord Gort found himself, almost from the start, thrown largely upon his own resources.

The most pressing need was to organise a line of defence along what had become the southern front of the Billotte Army Group. This was accomplished by manning the chain of canals which runs through Bethune and St. Omer to Gravelines and the sea; and the situation was, for the moment, relieved.

Secondly, various emergency forces were improvised. These were called, as a rule, by the names of the generals commanding them — Macforce, Petreforce

(Continued on following page)

# THE GORT DESPATCHES *(cont.)*

(Mason-Macfarlane, Petre), etc. The operations of those forces were particularly creditable because many of the troops composing them had been brought out from England not to fight but to dig and to complete their training. Half-trained and only partially armed, they clung grimly to the Canal du Nord, the Scarpe, Arras and other key points.

Lastly, on May 20, from his scanty reserves Lord Gort even contrived to organise a force (Frankforce) sufficient to counter-attack across the corridor. It was a gallant gesture, and the troops concerned reached their objectives for the first day. But adequate support was not forthcoming, and the effort ended. Still, casualties had been inflicted on the enemy, and delay had been imposed on a greatly superior enemy force against which Frankforce had blocked a vital road centre.

**The Triangle.**—On May 23 the B.E.F. found itself in the position of a beleaguered garrison, contained within a rough triangle some fifty miles each way.

The base of the triangle was the sea coast from Gravelines, near Calais, to Nieuport, in Belgium. The apex was at Douai, where most of the French were situated. The southern side followed the canal line, and was manned chiefly by our improvised forces; the eastern side was held by the three corps of the original B.E.F., with the Belgians on their left.

Our lines of communication were completely cut, and no more reserves were available. The B.E.F. were on half-rations. The Weygand plan was flickering out, and it was obvious now that our only alternatives were surrender, evacuation or a fight to the death.

Upon May 27 Lord Gort received a definite order from the Secretary of State for War, making it clear that his sole task now was to evacuate to England "the maximum number of your Force possible." On the same day the news came that the King of the Belgians, faced with the now imminent collapse of his Army, had asked for an armistice, and that a new gap, some twenty miles wide, was thus about to appear in the eastern face of the triangle, through which enemy tanks could pour towards the beaches.

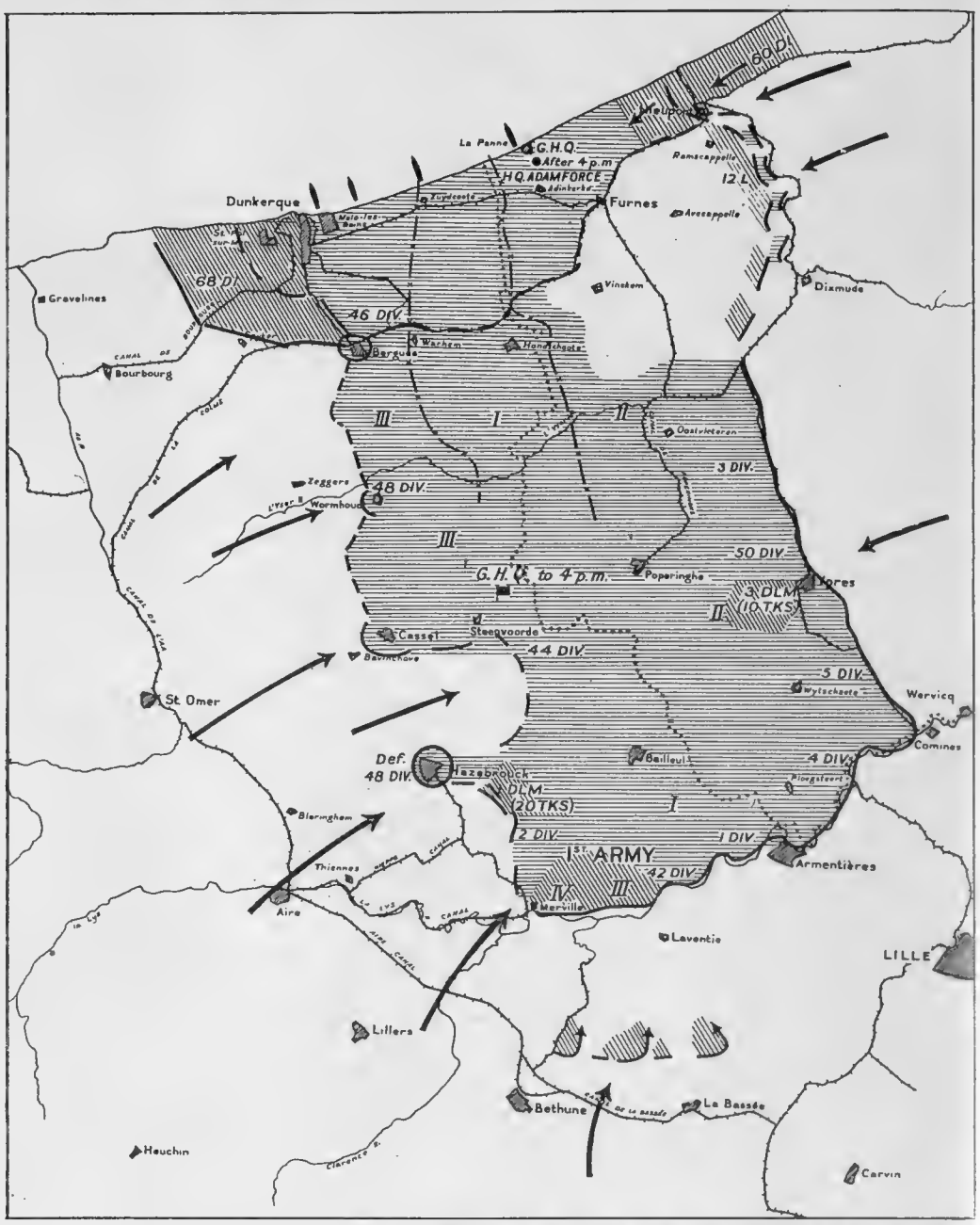
**Back to Dunkirk.**—Nothing now remained but to withdraw to a bridgehead (already reconnoitred) round Dunkirk, and cover the embarkation of as many troops as possible. Into Dunkirk Perimeter, as it was called, British and French troops accordingly fought their way back. Here the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force came to their help with a flotilla of every kind of craft to bear them home. Orders were issued that British and French troops were thenceforth to be embarked in equal proportions.

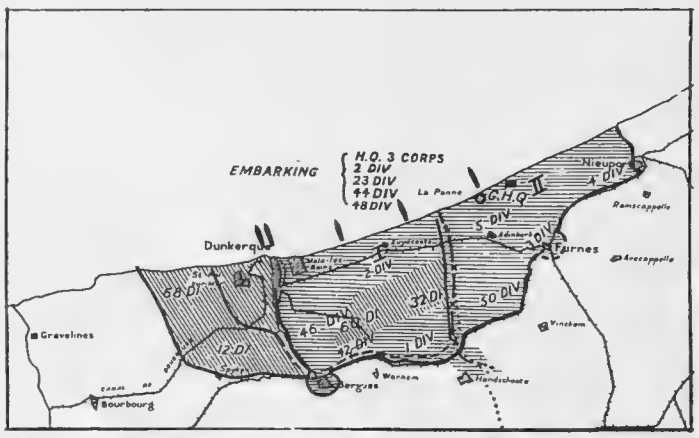
**The Final Scene.**—The story of the Dunkirk evacuation has often been told, and need not be repeated here. Indeed, Lord Gort himself did not witness its completion. He had already received instructions from the British Government, which left him no option, that as soon as the B.E.F., by evacuation, fell below the strength of three divisions, he was to hand over to a Corps Commander and return home.

Upon May 31 he handed over to Major-General Alexander, and sailed that night.

Four days later, in the small hours of June 3, his successor, accompanied by the Senior Naval Officer, made a tour of the Dunkirk beaches. They were deserted and empty. "On being satisfied," we are told, "that no British troops were left on shore, they themselves left for England."

Nearly 225,000 British soldiers (including 13,000 wounded) and some 112,000 French soldiers had preceded them to England, not counting some thousands more of French troops evacuated from Dunkirk to other ports in France.



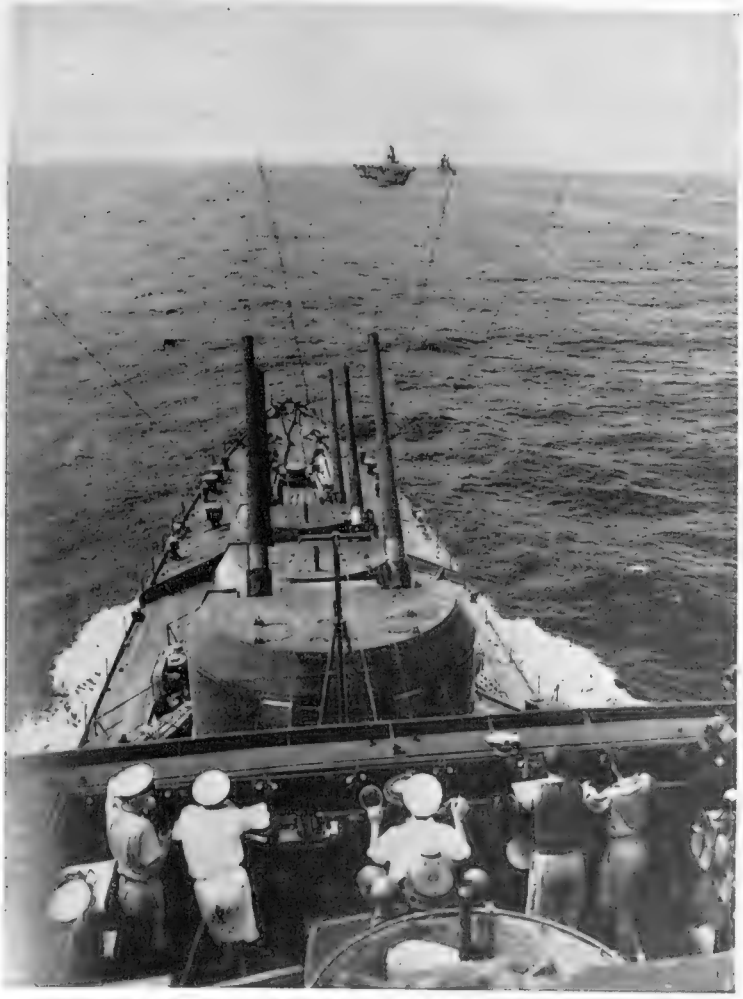

**VII. THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 30TH (MORNING)—The final phase:** "On the evening of 29th May, the organisation of the perimeter was complete. By 30th May there remained in the area, at an estimate, 80,000 British troops for evacuation, and I had now to complete the plans for the final withdrawal of the force. . . . I judged it would be imprudent to continue to maintain our position on the perimeter outside the permanent defences of Dunkirk for more than 24 hours longer. . . . That evening, at 6 p.m., my headquarters closed, and after handing over command to Major-General Alexander, I embarked in H.M.S. 'Hebe' and sailed for England about 2 a.m. on 1st June"

**VI. THE SITUATION AS KNOWN AT G.H.Q., MAY 28TH (AFTERNOON, APPROX.). [Note: D.L.M.=Division Légère Méchanique]:** "The enemy threat to the North-Eastern flank appeared certain to develop during the next forty-eight hours. The long South-Western flank was being subjected to constant and increasing pressure, especially at Cassel and Wormhoudt, and the arrival of the enemy heavy columns could not be long delayed. These considerations could not be lightly dismissed. While this discussion (with General Blanchard) was taking place, a liaison officer arrived from General Prioux, now in command of the French 1st Army, to say that the latter did not consider his troops were fit to make any further move, and that he therefore intended to remain in the area between Bethune and Lille, protected by the quadrangle of canals"

***On left*—MAJ.-GENERAL (NOW LIEUT.-GENERAL) THE HON. H. R. L. G. ALEXANDER (centre), in command of the 1st Division of the B.E.F.:** "I had selected him to remain in France in command of the 1st Corps, now numbering less than 20,000 men in all. On the afternoon of 31st May I gave him his instructions, which were based on those I had myself received from H.M. Government. He was to operate under the orders of Admiral Abrial and to assist the French in the defence of Dunkirk. At the same time he was to occupy himself with arrangements for the evacuation of his command, and I stressed the importance of the French sharing equally in the facilities which were provided for evacuation . . ."

**MAJOR-GENERAL V. M. FORTUNE (Commander of the 51st Division) with General Fagalde at Bethune:** The 51st arrived in France during early February 1940, and soon they relieved the 53rd French Division between Armentières and Croix de Poperinghe. Later the Division went to the Saar and took no part in the operations in Northern France. "From 10th May, therefore, it ceased to be under my effective command; the Saar force was later moved to the Rouen area, where it took part in subsequent operations." The foregoing is taken from Lord Gort's Despatches. Ultimately, General Fortune was captured by the enemy; and he is now the senior British officer prisoner of war

# MEDITERRANEAN EPISODE: *An Italian Air Attack on a Convoy Costs Them Eleven Aircraft*



RING THE PASSAGE OF THE CONVOY: The Aircraft-Carrier "Ark Royal" and H.M.S. "Nelson" as seen from a British cruiser

AN ITALIAN TORPEDO-DROPPING AIRCRAFT ON FIRE AFTER IT HAD CRASHED INTO THE SEA: Eleven aircraft in all were destroyed. "Ark Royal" is seen on the right

On its way through the Mediterranean recently, a large British convoy, with a Royal Navy escort under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir James Somerville, was discovered by Italian reconnaissance aircraft. Later, an intense attack from the air was attempted by the Italians; but aircraft flown from the deck of H.M.S. *Ark Royal* were swiftly in the air, and eleven enemy bombers were shot down into the sea. The British convoy got through safely after driving off many subsequent air attacks: but, true to form, the Italian Navy did not venture out of harbour. It was claimed by the enemy—once again—that the Aircraft-Carrier *Ark Royal* had been sunk: this claim, like others which have preceded it, was false. But H.M.S. *Nelson* was hit by a torpedo dropped from one of the Italian aircraft and suffered some damage which was, however, not regarded as serious

S. "NELSON," 34,000-TON BATTLESHIP, after being hit by a torpedo dropped an Italian aircraft. The damage she suffered was not considered serious

BRITISH CORVETTES, WHICH HAD BROUGHT THE CONVOY SAFELY from England, entering Gibraltar Harbour

AFTER THE ITALIAN AIR ATTACKS HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED: The tension aboard one of the capital ships (H.M.S. "Rodney") eases off

**A STRETCHER PARTY AT WORK: Rescuing a man whose house in the London area was demolished during the Blitz. The man was buried for nearly three hours, but suffered only superficial wounds!**

# LET THE R.A.M.C. TAKE OVER!

*A Full Examination of the Stretcher Parties in the A.R.P. System, And an Urgent Plea for Their Reorganisation*

By CHARLES GRAVES

"HAVE the casualty services justified themselves?" This question must now be considered in relation with the present urgent demand for man-power and woman-power in the factories and in the Fighting Services. And because of the absorption of unnecessary thousands of men and women into the First Aid Civil Defence Services, the answer is very definitely "No." Magnificent work has been done; supreme courage has been displayed and many lives have been saved; but surely the Ministry of Home Security and the Ministry of Health must have realised, after observing the air raids of last winter, that the services could be drastically decreased, and that much of the A.R.P. system needs complete reorganisation.

There are twenty-nine Metropolitan Boroughs, each of which is required to employ, equip, train and control a specified number of stretcher-bearers. Thus, by leaving the responsibility to local authorities, the seeds of discontent among stretcher-bearers spring up. Some local authorities are more efficient than others; some are more considerate over the welfare of the men than others; some are better equipped than others: such items circulate—the men draw comparisons. Each borough is jealous of its rights, and there is no knowledge of co-operation between adjacent boroughs. It is admitted that adjoining boroughs are considered together in the form of "groups," so that during air raids one-third of the stretcher-bearer strength is maintained for the purpose of assisting other boroughs in the group, if required; but at no period of the war has a certain East End borough been required to call for additional stretcher-bearers; on only two occasions has it been requested to send assistance outside its boundaries; and on one of these occasions the call was apparently unnecessary and the stretcher-bearers, having reached their rendezvous, were promptly sent home.

Stretcher-bearers are reserved at the age of thirty-five. The Ministry of Home Security describe them as "Civil Defence Volunteers," which is faintly ridiculous in view of the fact that the majority would leave the service if given the chance. Many of the younger ones would welcome the disciplined life of the armed forces in which they would command more respect from their friends and relations; for it must be remembered that most of their work has been done during black-out hours when they have been invisible to the public, so that the latter, seeing only an inactive body of men during the daytime, sometimes regard them with scorn and derision. The public quickly forget their patience through hours of boredom, and the magnificent courage of these men. The older stretcher-bearers would mostly welcome release because of the financial opportunities and less arduous restrictions in war factories.

The stretcher-bearers employed in London number many thousands. In this East End borough, with which I am familiar, about a quarter are keen and intelligent, half regard it as steady employment with sound opportunities for carrying on other business on their alternate days off duty, and the remaining quarter are largely "scroungers" who cannot or are unwilling to learn much, and who contribute nothing to the service. The first quarter are mainly the younger men who are called up to the Fighting Services just when they have become efficient stretcher-bearers, and who, even if they remain, become discouraged by the amount of dead-weight they have to carry and by the laxity of discipline amongst the others.

Almost anybody can be employed as a stretcher-bearer and up to any age, for usually the local authorities are only too ready to bring their number up to "strength." There is no medical examination of new recruits, with the result that the sickness rate, especially after the qualifying period of three months, is enormous.

Until June of this year there was no differentiation in pay (£3 10s. a week) between the stretcher-bearer officers (or party leaders) and the remainder. This produced great discontent, because the party leaders and the stretcher-party supervisors had much additional work and responsibility which was not, apparently, recognised by the higher authorities, or incidentally, by the remaining stretcher-bearers, because it is widely known that the ordinary British working man respects the skill and authority of his fellow-man, not because of the stripes on his arm or his white steel helmet, but in direct ratio to the difference in wages. The Ministry of Home Security, no doubt, kept thinking that all men were equal, and that it was a band of "volunteers," and so therefore the pay should be equal. The result was increasing lack of harmony and discipline.

It is almost impossible to obtain adequate discipline among stretcher-bearers, for no practical code of discipline has ever been outlined. The majority carry out the routine duties of the depot adequately, but among the remainder there are agitators, slackers and persistent grumblers. Absenteeism and a completely care-free attitude to the service are quite common. The only redress is legal prosecution, which is only undertaken by the Town Clerk's Department if the case against the culprit is quite definite and preferably if he also has a long "black record."

The question of payment during sickness has developed into a farce. After a qualifying period of three months, a whole-time C.D. volunteer is allowed sick leave on full pay for a maximum of thirteen weeks in any one year; weekly medical certificates must be furnished to the local authority, and a certificate supplying also the prognosis must be furnished at the end of the first month. Stretcher-bearers experience no difficulty in furnishing these certificates, for if one doctor is unwilling, then every doctor in the neighbourhood is visited until a medical certificate is obtained. But even more disastrous is the regulation by which any whole-time volunteer can be absent for two days up to a total of seven days in a year without having to supply a medical certificate. The volunteer must notify the local officer, usually the depot superintendent, that he feels unwell. This has become so greatly abused that on some week-ends as many as 25 per cent. of the personnel are away and apparently unwell.

There is no form of staff college or school to which party leaders and officers can be sent for refresher and advanced courses. Such schools would encourage exchange of thought, and would establish some form of cohesion between the various districts.

**AN ELDERLY VICTIM OF THE BOMBS IN SOUTH LONDON: She was rescued from the debris of her home after it had been hit by an enemy bomb**

A TYPICAL BAND OF A.R.P. WORKERS: The men who worked through the last Blitz in London, and who are ready for another, should it come!

During an air raid a warden may report to the local control room an incident where there are casualties. It is customary then to dispatch to the site an ambulance, a stretcher party, and a light rescue party if there are trapped casualties. Experience has shown that by the time these services have arrived, the uninjured and most of the slightly injured have disappeared—to a shelter or the nearest first-aid post. There are thus few casualties for the stretcher-bearers to attend to immediately, and in any case the minimum of first-aid measures are undertaken, for the black-out and poor working conditions render it almost impossible. The remaining casualties are trapped or buried, and are excavated individually by the rescue party which the stretcher-bearers assist to some extent.

In London the stretcher-bearers are under the control of the local authorities, while the rescue service and the ambulance service are under the control of the L.C.C. It is quite incomprehensible that there are these three separate services, all working for the same purpose, and yet whose training and organisation are carried out as individual units. Stretcher-bearers have had some training in light rescue work, but it is necessary to say that in the typical borough with which I am dealing the three services are kept sharply distinct, and there is almost no form of co-operation.

These three services absorb an enormous amount of man-power, which is largely wasted and is hardly efficient. The solution is simple and practical:—

1. Abandon the stretcher-bearer service entirely.

2. Attach the best stretcher-bearers to the rescue service and the ambulance service. Attach two skilled stretcher-bearers to each light rescue party, which will now carry four stretchers and simple first-aid equipment. Attach two skilled stretcher-bearers to each ambulance. This would result in all the first aid at an incident being performed by four skilled men rather than, as often happens at present, by eight or sixteen mediocre and often poorly-trained men.

3. Remove all control in London from local authorities; place these services under one head.

4. Establish a Central Medical Board for the examination of new recruits. In large towns there would also be local Medical Boards which would hold a daily sick parade—this would exclude the temptation of local medical practitioners to sign medical certificates for their own patient, because Medical Boards would have no personal interest.

5. Special Medical Certificates after one month of sick leave should be signed by the Central Medical Board after careful examination of the patient.

6. The pernicious system of two days' sick leave without a medical certificate should be abandoned.

7. A staff college should be established in each area to which the skilled first-aid workers could be sent for revision and advanced courses.

8. A code of discipline should be established affecting rescue-workers, stretcher-bearers now called first-aid workers, and ambulance drivers; a list of penalties should be drawn up which could be enacted immediately following the offence by the officer in charge of the depot. This would reduce to a minimum the magnification of a few agitators and slackers, so that recourse to the Civil Courts would be hardly ever necessary.

9. The few stretcher-bearers remaining would now be skilled first-aid workers attached to the rescue and ambulance services. They would be efficient and therefore should not be called up into the armed forces. A form of efficiency pay should be established as in the Army, so that those with months of service should be paid at a higher rate than any new recruits.

10. The twenty-four-hour system should be abandoned; it is high time that the first-aid services were recognised by the Government as a full-time service, and not as a form of semi-volunteer measure in which the men on their alternate days off duty openly pursue their normal or other casual work. The men themselves would wish to be recognised as members of a whole-time skilled service.

All these services would be controlled by one Central Authority.

Now what about the First-Aid Posts? Have they justified their existence? Again the answer is in the negative.

In one borough in the East End of London there are five first-aid posts and three casualty clearing stations. The first-aid posts employ a full-time staff of approximately one hundred persons who have had little to do. Professor Trueta, who had had vast experience in the Spanish Civil War, addressed many medical meetings in this country before the outbreak of the present hostilities, and whole-heartedly condemned first-aid posts in towns. They especially increase the dangers of shock. His practical experience and views were widely supported, and yet the Government promptly set out hundreds of first-aid posts.

Abandon the present system of all first-aid posts in town. Attach the staffs to the hospitals which are short of nurses already. This would remedy the shortage and would provide interesting experience for the untrained nurses. Retain the first-aid posts in charge of caretakers: each would be visited daily by a hospital first-aid nurse for the purpose of keeping stock and essential cleaning. Attach to each hospital in the district a large "sorting station" at the entrance, which would serve as a magnified first-aid post, staffed by the hospital trained and untrained nurses, doctors, and possibly medical students; this would prevent the dangers of frequent movement of casualties, would remove the influence of local authorities, and would provide for the more economic use of partially trained nurses. The larger shelters have medical aid posts, which are miniature forms of first-aid posts, and these are rendering the latter more and more superfluous. It may be argued that the casualties would have farther to walk if going to hospital posts, but it may be said that most of the injured would not be walking but would be going by car, while the slightly injured would go to the nearest large shelter, where they would receive simple treatment to last for the remainder of the night. Despatch all mobile units to country areas. If the hospital were directly bombed, then a flying squad of four persons—a doctor, nurse, and two untrained nurses—would be sent to one of the present existing first-aid posts to take over temporarily.

Cleansing centres at first-aid posts should be retained; if blister gas occurs then trained flying squads would be sent from the hospital to each cleansing centre. A large squad is not needed, and is, in fact, to be deplored. Gas will certainly produce some degree of panic, and it is far better for these patients, who should be quite fit, that they be given something to do.

It seems to me that the most suitable solution of all would be to let the R.A.M.C. take over the casualty services as part of their duties. The Ministry of Labour claim that men and women are badly needed for the Forces and factories, and it seems fantastic that thousands of persons should be confined to Civil Defence work which, even under the conditions of last winter, can really only be called part-time work; for a few days of heavy work were always followed by weeks of inactivity. These men and women have shown a splendid record which will claim the admiration of all, but they know as well as anybody else that the men are needed in the Forces, and the women in the hospitals and factories; a war happens to be in progress, and it is surely justifiable to use every ounce of man- and woman-power to its best advantage.

It is believed that the R.A.M.C. would welcome the experience; discipline and efficiency would become apparent. Light rescue work and stretcher-bearing would be carried out by field ambulances; the hospitals would continue largely in their present manner but would be under the final control of the R.A.M.C. Country districts would be maintained as at present.

It is felt that this might be a really practical solution, for presumably the fear of invasion will remain throughout the war, and therefore a large Army will have to be retained in England.

STRETCHER-PARTY WORKERS SELECTING LITERATURE for their leisure hours from a mobile library in St. Pancras

A WONDERFUL RESCUE DURING LAST WINTER'S RAIDS: A woman brought out from a mass of debris after having been buried under the wreckage for many hours

The World of Books—By Vernon Fane

# VIVID ACCOUNTS OF THE NAZI SCOURGE

*William L. Shirer's Berlin Diary; The Polish Angle; A Professor Witnesses the Subjugation of Norway; A Third Issue of Modern Reading*

I WONDER how many people could have forecast with any accuracy the course that radio would take in this war. By that I do not mean the development of radiolocation and all those kind of things, but of ordinary plain broadcasting, carrying the mixture of news, politics and feature programmes to which people had become used. So receptive and so impressionable has the public been found to be to broadcast personalities that the newspaper as an interpreter of foreign news now takes a back place, and the broadcast correspondent has easily outdistanced the old-time foreign and even the war correspondent. An interesting fact which emerges in this connection is that with the development of radio the internal life of the enemy is not as closed a book as it tended to be in previous wars. Every day and every night broadcasts go out over the air from Berlin. I am not suggesting that the stuff put out over the Deutschlandsender by the traitor Joyce can be regarded as of any value in the sense in which I am writing. But I do suggest that the broadcasts by American correspondents in Berlin and from the other capitals of Europe to the U.S.A. are in themselves revealing and of considerable interest, despite the rigours of the enemy's censorship.

Mr. William L. Shirer was originally an American foreign correspondent in Europe, but in 1937 he met Ed. Murrow of the Columbia Broadcasting System (he is now doing a wonderful job from London on the same system) and became one of the first of the radio foreign correspondents. That was before Munich. In fact, it was before the rape of Austria, which was one of Mr. Shirer's first big assignments.

BERLIN DIARY (Hamish Hamilton. 12s. 6d.) goes right back to those early days, and although the most revealing, and for that reason interesting, part of the book is that which deals with conditions in Germany after the war, I personally found that the pre-war entries filled in many blanks in the progression towards the final struggle. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hitler's unfeigned delight at his triumph at Munich, Poland, the declaration of war, the Maginot Line period, Norway, Holland, Belgium, the fall of France and all the rest of the grim progression of world-shattering events are here seen through the eyes of a man who was on the other side of the fence while it was going on.

Mr. Shirer never had any love for the Nazis, and apparently never made any attempt to conceal his dislike for them. At the same time he was well able to assess the true value of their triumphs in the political field, as well as in the field of war. He had met them all and knew some of them very well indeed. Naturally, he was for ever battling with the censorship and with Dr. Goebbels's extremely efficient department. An illuminating entry is that of December 27, 1939, when he was given an opportunity to look over the German Fleet. Particularly interesting was the cruiser *Leipzig*, which, "the officer said they would be lucky to get back into port afloat after a British torpedo had hit it squarely. The B.B.C., he said, claimed that the ship had been sunk." Mr. Shirer wanted to broadcast the truth about the *Leipzig*, but Dr. Goebbels's assistant was not having that. "You will answer the dastardly English lie, isn't it? You will tell the truth to the great American people. Tell them that you have seen the *Leipzig* with your own eyes, isn't it?—and that the ship has not been scratched." Dr. Goebbels was to be disappointed in that little piece, however.

Mr. Shirer knew, very naturally, Haw Haw, "who in Germany goes by the name of Froehlich (which in German means 'Joyful'), who denies that he is a traitor. . . . He kept talking about 'we' and 'us,' and I asked him which people he meant. 'We Germans, of course!' he snapped." Then there is Joyce's colleague, Jack Trevor, an English actor. "His one burning passion is hatred for the Jews." The third traitor is Baillie Stewart. "He did some broadcasts at first, but his Scottish nature was too unbending for the Nazi officials. He is now off the air and working as a translator in the Foreign Office."

BRITISH PRISONERS-OF-WAR: A GROUP OF THE STAFF AT OFLAG VII D

All prisoners' camps in Germany—although under direct German control—have their own British staff for the purpose of administration on regimental lines: this applies in particular to the Officers' camps. Here is the Staff at Oflag VII D. From left to right, in the back row, are: Capt. Brown, Major Finlayson, Padre Dunlop, Capts. Davidson-Houston, Burge and Hilton, Padre King, Lieuts. Waterhouse, Biggar and Hammond. In the centre row are: Major Aylmer, Capt. Holberton, Lieut.-Colonel Wirefeld, Lieut.-Colonel Gamble, Colonel Levack, Majors Shaw and Poole. In the front row are: Padre Cave, Lieut. Sherrif, Capt. Thorne

One of the most ghastly entries in Mr. Shirer's book is that in which he notes that "the Gestapo is now systematically bumping-off the mentally deficient people of the Reich. The Nazis call them mercy deaths. . . . A Pastor who runs a large hospital for various kinds of feeble-minded children at Bethel, was ordered to be arrested a few days ago because he refused to deliver up some of his more serious mental cases to the secret police. Shortly after this his hospital is bombed by the 'British.' Must look into this story."

The book has caused a sensation in the U.S.A. It may very well be as popular here.

Passing to IT STARTED IN POLAND, by U. Dragomir (Faber and Faber. 8s. 6d.), one has the impression of reading the same story from another angle. There is enough about the swaggering Nazis in the moment of their Polish triumph in Mr. Shirer's book to add something to the tale of fierce and heroic resistance in this one. The Poles were in a hopeless position from the beginning, but they fought as if they didn't know it, or at least as if they were determined not to believe it. It is a terrible story, but one which must add yet another glorious page to the history of that long-suffering nation.

M. Dragomir was a Polish Civil Servant, comfortably off, cultivated and happy in his life. Very soon he was to become a wandering refugee, dressed in rags, half-starved, hunted and fighting back wherever he could find the enemy. There are dreadful things in this book, and not all of them enacted on the German front. When these proud people rise again to their rightful status in Europe, it is inconceivable that someone will not be called upon to pay for the wanton oppression and cruelties which have been inflicted upon them.

Another document from an oppressed people is NORWAY REVOLTS AGAINST THE NAZIS (Lindsey Drummond. 5s.). The author, Professor Worm-Muller, of Oslo University, made his escape only at the end of last year. Consequently, he saw the invasion at first hand. He saw the German attempts to beguile and bemuse the Norwegians into an attitude of complete surrender. He saw how they used the Quislings, and he met the notorious Terboven. His conclusion is that the soul of Norway has neither been crushed nor tricked. In the past few days German firing-squads have been active in Oslo, but neither by this means nor by any other will the Nazis subjugate a country whose very history is steeped in the blood and sacrifice of free men.

I would like to call attention to the third issue of MODERN READING, just published at 1s. Readers may like to be reminded that this publication contains short stories, essays and poems by young writers, some of them already well known. It is an excellent and well-balanced collection, and there is a story by William Soroyan as well as a critical piece on that author by H. E. Bates.

## The THEATRE in LONDON

By PHILIP PAGE

THE world of the theatre is one in which tradition dies hard. Of very long standing is the idea that no story which concerns the theatre itself (and the circus is included) and the private lives of actors and actresses, has much chance of success. In this sense—but in no other—*The Nutmeg Tree*, at the Lyric, had better be waved aside at once. Its story reeks of the theatre; its leading character is an actress; a troupe of acrobats figure prominently; and much of the talk is "shop." Yet I fancy the public will like it. Partly, perhaps, because the public to-day is vastly different. Many mistakes have been made in the film world, but the production of films innumerable with "back-stage" plots has not been one of them.

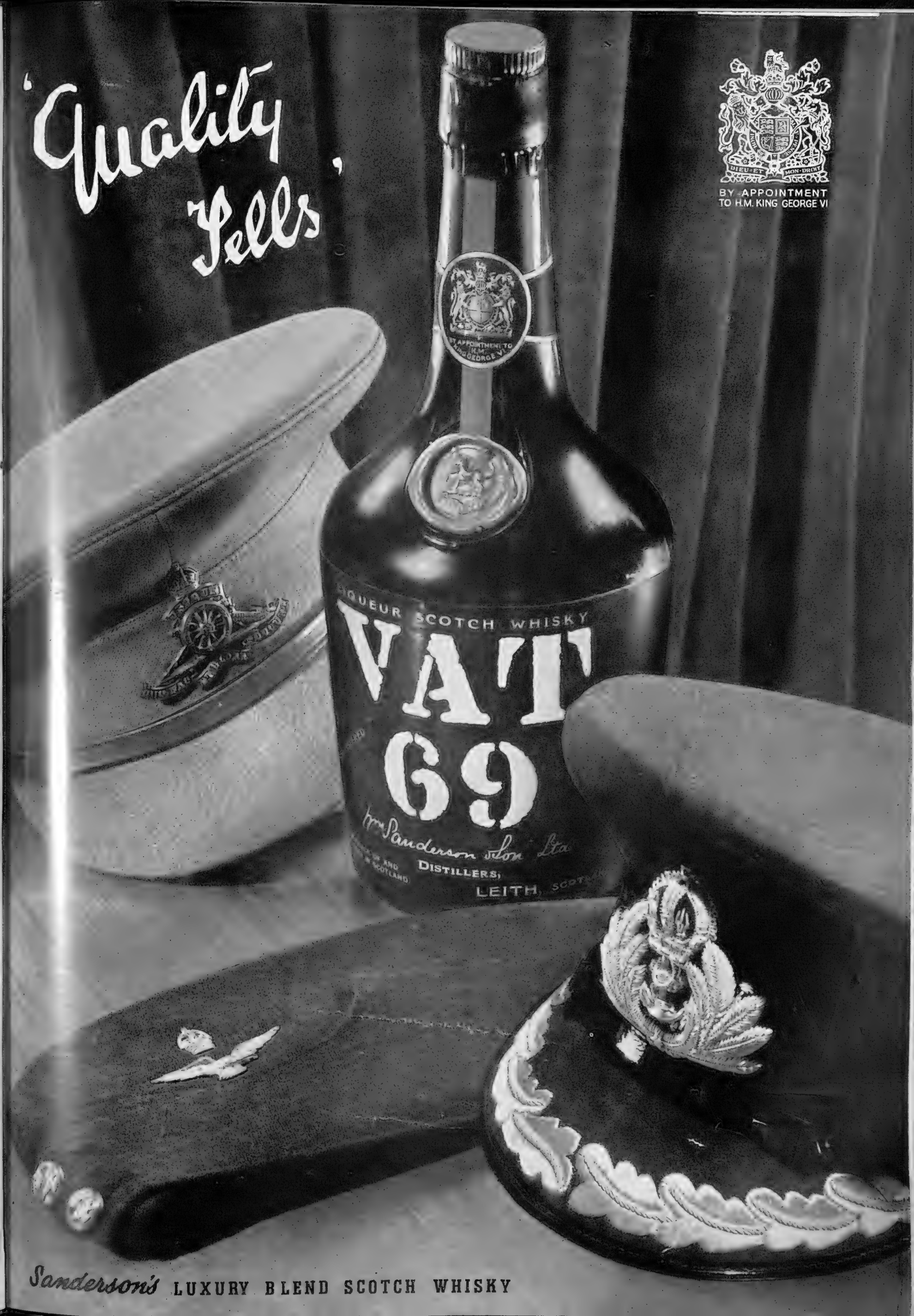
Miss Margery Sharp has made a good play out of her story of a middle-aged actress whose actions, thoughts and associates are vividly, and frequently amusingly, contrasted with her prim and priggish young daughter who moves in a very different world. This is a fine part for Miss Yvonne Arnaud (who makes the most of it quite brilliantly), and it is a relief to find this actress given for once in a way something more important to do than exploit her fascinating accent. It is essentially a *virtuoso* part—Miss Arnaud is a first-rate pianist, anyway—and the periods when the soloist is silent might have been tedious had the orchestral accompaniment been provided by players less efficient than Mr. Frederick Leister, Miss Helen Haye, Miss Maire O'Neill and Mr. Robert Andrews.

*Sorotchintsi Fair.*—"It's Russian—so you've got to listen to it, and like it." There is more than a hint of this attitude in our theatre just now, and for reasons of high diplomacy it may be a wise one. But it certainly does not apply to the present Russian season at the Savoy Theatre, from which it should keep nobody away. Moussorgsky's light opera, *Sorotchintsi Fair*, is unfamiliar to the majority of English music-lovers, whose knowledge of this composer's work is limited to *Boris Godounoff* and the symphonic poem, *A Night on the Bare Mountain* (which has recently been made known to millions by reason of its inclusion in the Walt Disney masterpiece *Fantasia*). It is fine stuff—full of vigour, vim, colour and, I imagine, humour also, for those lucky enough to understand Russian. I enjoyed every moment of it, because of the excellence of the music and of everything about this cheery production.

An outstanding performance was that of that glorious tenor and extremely good actor Comrade Pari Joneskov, whom I have long known as Mr. Parry Jones, a singer from the steppes of Wales.

## THE SHAFTESBURY HOMES AND "ARETHUSA" TRAINING SHIP

The Angel of Death visited a home and bore away the mother, leaving six children, the eldest of whom (a boy) was thirteen. The next was a girl of twelve, and she did her best to "mother" them all while her father was out at work. His earnings did not permit of engaging help. What should he do? He was advised to appeal to this Society, and to-day his burden is lifted by knowing that Pansy, aged eight; Christine, aged nine; and Kenneth, aged five, are all being safely cared for, and happy with others of their own age. For ninety-eight years this Society has been caring for such children. Not only does the Angel of Death visit the poor homes, he also visits those who have been the valued supports of the Society. Who will become a supporter and fill a vacant place? Large or small donations are eagerly welcomed. Write for a copy of the Quarterly Magazine, and read for yourself what is being done. Address 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2.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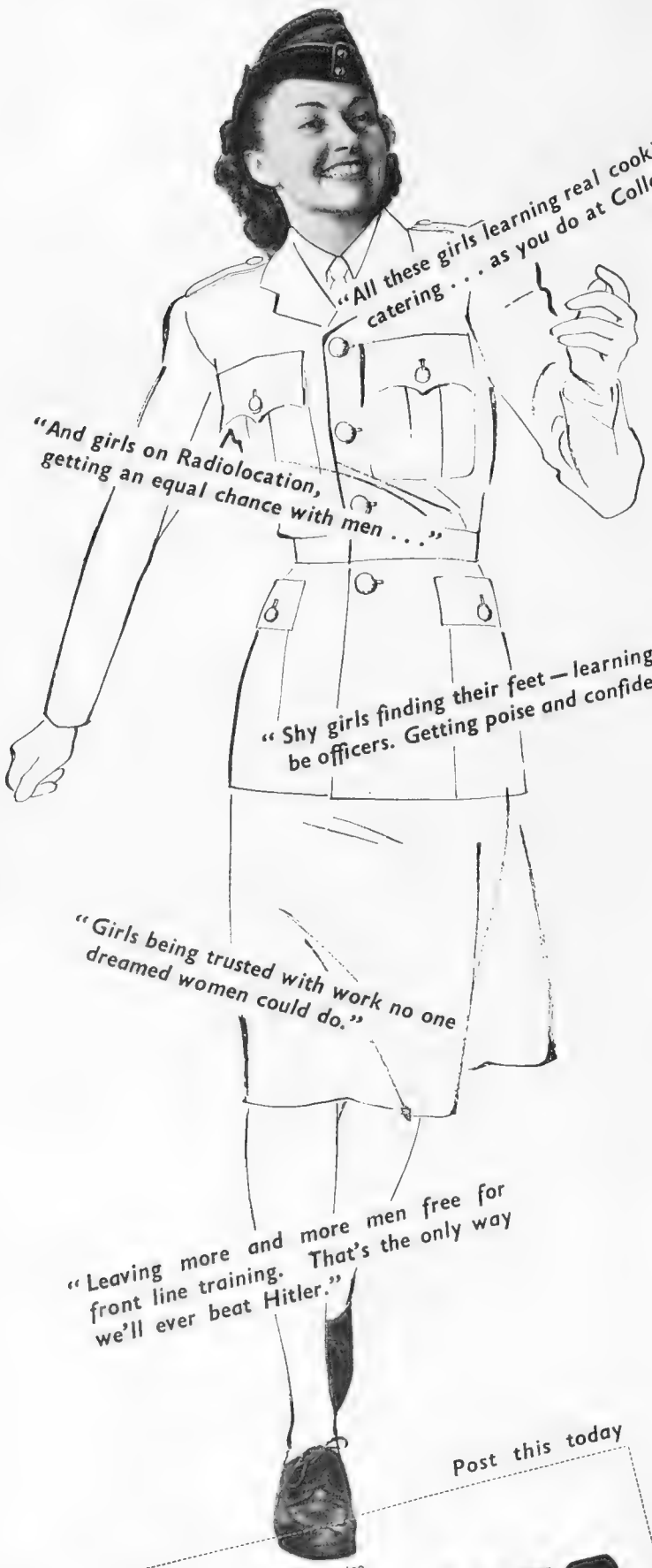


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Please send me full story of life in the A.T.S. and details of the opportunities it offers. This does not commit me in any way.

Mrs/Miss ..... Age..... (in confidence)

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(Unsealed envelope, penny stamp)

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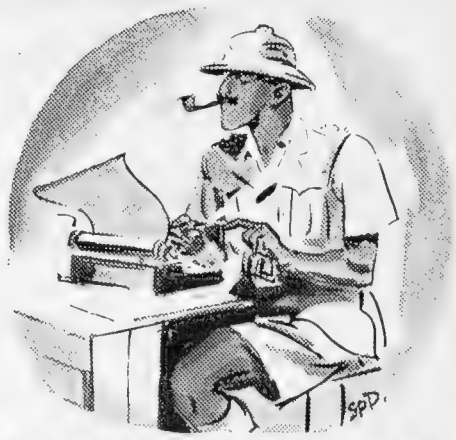

AIR MAIL—PAR AVION

Dear Hawkins :

Last time I was Home on leave you expressed a wish to accompany me as batman " if the necessary strings could be manipulated, as it were ". Unfortunately, they couldn't, and my frugal wants are ministered to by a batman who was, in private life, a professional strong man in a circus. A most excellent man, but lacking both flair and temperament for making a really capable valet.

Will you believe it, Hawkins, when I tell you that he'd never heard of Rose's Lime Juice, and actually thought that a hangover was a term used by performers on the flying trapeze ? Needless to say, *that* gap in his education has already been made good.

We can get plenty of Rose's Lime Juice out here, but I doubt if it flows very plentifully at Home these days. Still, do lay in a few bottles if you can — they will come in handy for the victory celebrations !

Glad to hear you've got your three stripes in the H.G.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely, G. de St. G.

There is no substitute for ROSE'S Lime Juice

SUMMIT OXFORD

14'6

Strong warm fabric for the autumn. Coloured or chalk stripes on plain grounds : Blue, grey, lovat and fawn. Two polo-shaped collars with every shirt ; three lengths of sleeve to every collar size.

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**J. E. S.**

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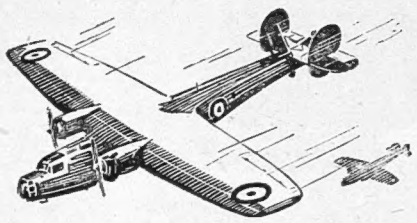

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# IN QUEST OF GOOD HOTELS

BY ASHLEY COURTENAY

*Owing to rationing of paper and the demand on our editorial pages, it is necessary to omit from time to time Mr. Ashley Courtenay's usual weekly article. We would, however, emphasise that his services are always available for advising* SPHERE *readers by post of hotels, both large and small, known to him personally. Letters, accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope for reply, should be addressed to him c/o The Editor* THE SPHERE, *Commonwealth House, 1, New Oxford Street, London, W.C.1. Personal and telephone inquiries however, cannot be accepted.*

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50 bedrooms. 50 bathrooms. Not a house in sight, yet within comfortable walking distance of Cheltenham's leafy promenades. An hotel which has set for itself a high standard in creature comforts. From 25s a day. *Telephone* 52732 *and* 52407

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In these abnormal times patrons for lunch or dinner are urged to book tables in advance. Ring Hurley 244, preferably 24 hours previously.

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There is nowhere else quite like it and so suitable for winter residence. A Country Home where you can be certain of warmth, plenty of hot water and interesting food. Club licence. 32 miles London

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A.D. 1430. Not a prohibited area. For leave or a restful holiday come to this historic house; excellent food from our own farms, modern comforts, good fellowship, in atmosphere of the good old times.

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100 bedrooms, modern bathrooms, and lift. Terms from 4 gns.
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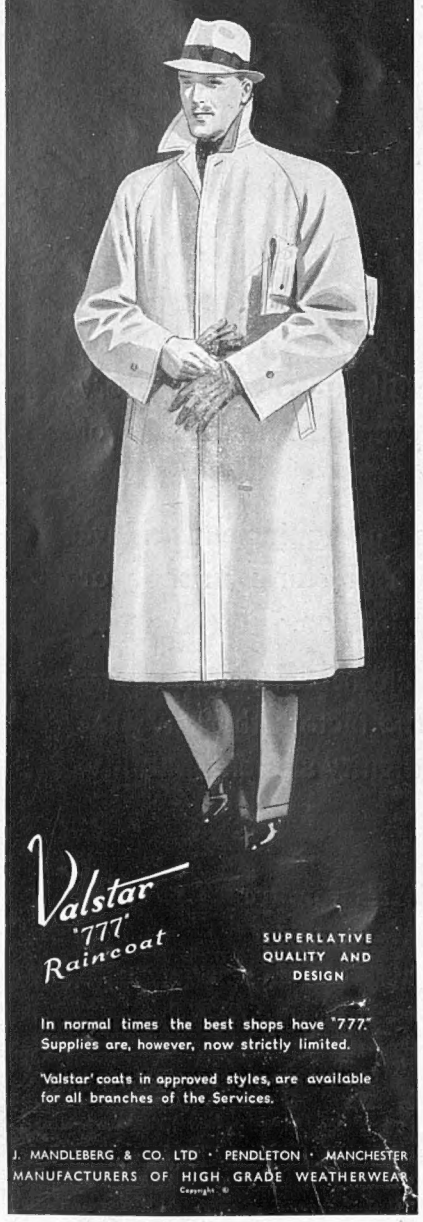

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# AUTUMN CAMPAIGN

NO temporary drift in the scene of war can bring us relaxation from our exertions, nor increase in the good things we enjoyed in peacetime.

In spite of everything the war occasionally seems "a long way off." But if around you to-day there should be an appearance of peace, let the wartime scantiness of the displays on the sweetshop counters remind you that, as a nation, we are very much at war.

They are a sign that the proper name for this moment in the life of our nation is not just autumn —but Autumn Campaign.

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